



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

### Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 12th, 2024, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, California

#### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to Order: 11:41 AM by Chair Wear

#### 2. Roll Call & Check In

A quorum was present with the following commission members:

**Present:** G. Sewell-Murphy, D. Thompson, C. Jackson, D. Wear, K. Lynch, A. Portillo-Knowles, C. Kenney

**Absent:** O. Willis, J. Lee

**Council Liaison:** Cesar Zepeda

#### 3. Approval of Minutes

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes

1st – D. Thompson, 2nd – C. Kenney

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Special Meeting Minutes

1st – C. Kenney, 2nd – D. Thompson

#### 4. Chair Report

Chair Wear provided the Economic Development Commission with an excerpt from the City's Boards and Commissions Handbook on the policy of absences and excused absences. Commissioners can miss up to three meetings in the year, on the fourth meeting, it is an automatic resignation. Commissioners can contact the Chair of the commission to excuse their absence before the meeting. Staff will send out the handbook to the Commission.

#### 5. Old and/or New Business

a. Richmond Green Blue New Deal (RGBND) (Justine Burt, Consultant - Appracel)

i. Powerpoint presentation followed by Q&A

Consultant Justine Burt provided a presentation on the RGBND Opportunities Report. She spent nine months engaging with the community through workshops, champion meetings, surveys, and more. The community raised concerns about illegal dumping, soil contamination, poor air quality, health issues, power blackouts, the growing unhoused population, food insecurity, limited access to parks, a less dense tree canopy than nearby communities, and difficulty accessing healthcare and mental health services. The community also expressed a need to focus on the following priorities: Benefit residents who most need support; ensure sustainable and long-term benefits for residents, including health, employment, and housing stability; leverage and rely on the expertise of community leaders and organizations; employ union labor; local hiring preferences; consider and monitor unintended consequences; clarify who will implement the plan. Richmond has a rich manufacturing history, spanning two centuries and was founded before the advent of environmental regulations. HR&A conducted an economic insights analysis, revealing that

Richmond has foundational elements for transitioning to green-blue industries, with positive implications for green jobs. Burt provided a list of 24 green-blue projects and requested the commission select their top three projects for Richmond. She discussed funding mechanisms for the projects and the importance of capacity building for the implementation of the RGBND, including hiring.

Chair Wear asked about the blue tech incubator and accelerator and if the push was approved by Blue Frontier. Burt confirmed that this was suggested by Blue Frontier.

Commissioner Thompson asked about the status of the report. Burt stated that she handed the City the final report in early May and was working with a graphic designer for formatting and editing. Her intention was to present it to the Council in June, but it was pushed to September because the final pieces of the report are still being negotiated. Her contract ends on June 30th, and she is 95% finished with the implementation plan and the community engagement toolkit.

Commissioner Lynch thanked Burt for the presentation and her work. Commissioner Lynch's top three priorities are: 1) Port upgrades due to the scale of the project and the potential for hiring incentives. 2) Green accessory dwelling and tiny homes, addressing historically redlined communities with a possible grant program. 3) Building deconstruction firms, targeting blighted, dilapidated properties, especially in historically redlined communities, to support reparations efforts.

Commissioner Jackson questioned the prioritization of large-scale projects in relation to the smaller training center project. She noted that while large projects would bring many jobs, the training center seemed less significant in terms of job creation. She asked if there was a training prioritization component within the plan to support all the new jobs. Burt explained that the 24 projects are an expansive list of potential projects, and the city does not have to enact every project. She also noted that there is a lot of skilled and talented labor ready for these jobs. The Workforce Development/Employment and Training Department is set up to provide training, with funding available at federal, state, and local levels, but the project needs to be ready before training can begin.

Commissioner Kenney added that the educational system dictates the requirements for jobs, particularly in the tech industry. She asked if prioritization should be simultaneous and not an afterthought, with a plan in place to train people as jobs are created. Chair Wear noted that unions are supporting the return of shop classes in high schools, ensuring that students can be trained and ready for these jobs upon graduation.

The commissioners then provided Burt with their top 3 of the 24 projects presented.

ii. EDC action plans

Chair Wear discussed and suggested that the commission develop an action plan. One action she would like to encourage is for the commissioners to communicate with the City Council by attending meetings, making public comments, sending emails, and making phone calls. This will ensure that their comments are on record, allowing the EDC to address the issues and hold the City Council and commission accountable.

b. 2024 Project Reports

i. Taste of Richmond

Commissioner Kenney presented a proposal to transform Taste of Richmond from a one-day event into a week-long celebration titled **Restaurant Week**. Currently, Taste of Richmond allows small business restaurants to showcase their food and business in a single-day format. Commissioner Kenney raised a key question: "Is the event providing long-term support to the restaurants currently serving the city?" She examined whether the current format encourages post-event patronage and assessed its economic impact. Although food is free for attendees (who only need to purchase entry tickets), participating restaurants bear significant costs. Post-pandemic, food, lease, and operational costs have surged, with food costs up by 13.2% and labor costs by 15.1%. Participating small businesses do not receive compensation for the food they provide, which adds to the potential financial burden from participating in the event.

The new direction involves a week-long event aimed at promoting Richmond's restaurants through events at selected restaurants, social media campaigns, a dedicated website, and local and Bay Area news coverage. A comprehensive marketing plan will spotlight local restaurants, including collaborations across the city, special events, and community engagement activities like DJs, conversations with restaurant owners (Chop it Ups), and games to foster participation. To achieve this, partnerships with organizations such as CoBiz, Richmond Main Street Initiative, YouthWorks, Richmond Chamber of Commerce, the City of Richmond, Renaissance Center, and Empower Soul Studios will be crucial to pull this event off. One example is to engage with YouthWorks and hire students for support. A digital and hard copy *Taste of Richmond Magazine* is also planned (distribution depending on cost). This magazine will feature local eateries, "Best of Richmond" winners, advertisements (to generate revenue for the EDC), coupons, and stories of restaurant owners. The event will take place in early September.

Commissioner Kenney discussed that she will be presenting to City Council and will be requesting financial support of \$10,000.

6. **Subcommittee Reports**

a. Cannabis – Lead, K. Lynch

Commissioner Lynch discussed the dispensary vote. There was a town hall public hearing.

Commissioner Lynch only knew about the hearing the day before. They were able to connect with

Lina Velasco, Community Development Director, to get the correspondence of all the public comments. The main reason the dispensary vote was shut down due to the public comments that flooded the hearing process and the subcommittee's inability to mobilize the cannabis community stakeholders. The comments were mainly about youth access, public health, zoning, neighborhood impacts, equity and social responsibility on the city, and increased local control and regulation for cannabis. Commissioner Lynch is working on reviewing the correspondence and reorganizing the community stakeholders to prepare for future hearings on the dispensary vote. They are also working with MakeGreenGo, the technical assistance provider for the Cannabis Equity Program.

b. Sustainability – Lead, G. Sewell-Murphy

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy sent an update to Councilmember McLaughlin. In the email, Councilmember McLaughlin expressed her satisfaction with the commission's progress on this initiative and mentioned that she would be reaching out to inquire about funding to support the expo. In the update, Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked about the steps to becoming sustainable. Councilmember McLaughlin provided a link with information on how to become a certified sustainable business and its benefits. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked the commission if there were any parts of the initiative that the commissioners wanted to participate in. She also discussed branding and proposed the theme "Richmond Through Its Sustainable Links." She suggested that the commission discuss and vote on this theme. Additionally, she mentioned the survey results, noting that there is a significant need for education to increase business awareness of sustainability, the potential uses of industrial hemp, and what could be involved in the expo. Commissioner Lynch expressed support for the expo and asked the commission to prioritize this initiative.

**Report from City Council:**

Councilmember Zepeda was not present due to sickness.

**Public Comments/Announcements/Handouts**

Cordell Hindler submitted written comments to City staff.

1. The Mayor mentioned the EDC vacancies at a previous Council meeting.
2. The EDC Is Invited to the Contra Costa Mayors Conference on October 3rd at 6:30 PM hosted by the city of Richmond, location TBD.

**Next Meeting:** July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 11:30 AM

**7. Adjournment:** 1:00 PM