



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, California

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to order: 11:30 a.m. by Chair Kenney

2. Roll Call & Check In

Although a quorum was not present there were enough Commissioners present to conduct the meeting.

Present: Chair Kenney, Vice-Chair Thompson and Commissioners Lynch*, Wear, Sewell-Murphy* and Willis (*Arrived after Roll Call)

Absent: Commissioners Gliksohn, Jackson

Council Liaison: Doria Robinson

Staff Present: Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director; Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer; Junne Garcia, Management Analyst; Lizeht Zepeda, Senior Business Assistance Officer; Kyle Lam, Management Analyst and Mayor's Office Chief of Staff, Tony Tamayo

3. Approval of Minutes

February 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The approval of the February 12, 2025 meeting minutes was moved to the end of the meeting agenda in the event there was a quorum to take action at that time.

4. Chair Report

Chair Kenney apologized for missing last month's meeting due to the first day of her new job. She reviewed the meeting video, is up to date on the presentations, and plans to follow up with relevant organizations separately. For March, planning for the Taste of Richmond event has begun, with pre-work underway, including securing sponsorships, compiling a brand deck, and preparing an update for City Council on last year's event.

Goal setting for the Economic Development Commission (EDC) is ongoing. Chair Kenney thanked those Commissioners who submitted their goals and will finalize them based on submissions received before the next meeting.

5. Old and/or New Business

5a. Introduction(s) New Senior Business Assistance Officer: Jesson de Leon

Jesson de Leon introduced himself as the new Senior Business Assistance Officer for the Economic Development Department, replacing Lizeht Zepeda, who transitioned to the Port. A "boomerang" employee, he previously worked in the Finance Department as a Business License Investigator and tax collector, with knowledge of Richmond's businesses and Measure U taxes. With over 20 years in the financial services industry, he aims to foster new business development and community growth. Though residing in Pinole, he frequently visits Richmond and will share his contact details with the EDC. Lizeht Zepeda

reassured the EDC that she remains involved and expressed confidence in Mr. de Leon's ability to succeed in his new role.

Chair Kenney acknowledged guest David Robinson, a Richmond resident, who expressed interest in getting more involved in the community. Chair Kenney welcomed him and offered to address any questions he might have.

5b. Workforce Analysis Citywide

Ms. Zepeda confirmed the Workforce Analysis and contract were complete, with a presentation from the consultant to be scheduled. A PowerPoint presentation was available, and staff would ensure the information was accessible. Cordell Hindler noted a similar presentation had been provided to the City Council in June 2024, likely available on the City website.

Economic Development Director Beacham confirmed the workforce analysis had been presented to the City Council. Ms. Zepeda also introduced Council Liaison Doria Robinson, who expressed excitement to serve and discussed plans to create a Task Force for the Macdonald Corridor focused on economic growth and redevelopment. Richmond Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce would be involved.

Commissioner Wear noted EDC participation in the task force. Chair Kenney inquired about community involvement, and Council Liaison Robinson outlined plans for active engagement and transparent processes. Chair Kenney expressed interest in serving on the task force.

Chair Kenney also acknowledged Commissioner Sewell-Murphy's arrival at 11:45 a.m.

6. Subcommittee Reports

Items were taken out of order from how they had been shown on the meeting agenda.

- Policy & GBND (Lead, Willis)

Commissioner Willis reported that the Policy & Green Blue New Deal (GBND) Subcommittee met to review its priorities and align them with the EDC's goals. The Subcommittee requested a comparison of the GBND survey results with those of the EDC and discussed a potential field trip to the ports of Alameda and Oakland to explore recent developments. They also aimed to collaborate on fundraising opportunities across East Bay communities, from Alameda to Vallejo.

Commissioner Wear emphasized the importance of focusing on Richmond Main Street as a priority for the Subcommittee. She also inquired about the completion of the GBND survey. Ms. Zepeda confirmed the survey results would be available in April.

Commissioner Wear criticized the survey design, noting its reliance on perspective rather than opinion. Ms. Beacham clarified that the survey aimed to gather community feedback on priorities versus existing projects. She added that additional revisions to the report were underway.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked about the next steps after compiling the survey data. Ms. Beacham explained that the next step would be presenting the findings to the EDC for guidance on next steps, followed by more community outreach to refine the list of projects.

Council Liaison Robinson shared her concerns about the GBND report's lack of depth, especially in relation to the port and economic development opportunities. She emphasized the need for a more comprehensive analysis and discussed the Countywide Green Empowerment Zone (GEZ), which supports clean energy development through incentives and workforce training.

Commissioner Willis suggested there may be overlap between the GBND and GEZ efforts, particularly in workforce development. He stressed the importance of creating more jobs in Richmond, especially in the context of potential changes in the local energy landscape.

Ms. Zepeda added that Chevron's investments in green energy could provide opportunities for workforce development. Chair Kenney echoed the need for intentional community engagement in workforce preparation as part of the GBND.

Council Liaison Robinson noted that the GEZ Committee was also considering zoning updates to facilitate new business development in the region. Tony Tamayo, Chief of Staff for the Mayor's Office, clarified that the permitting issue with Raven SR was at the County level, not with the City of Richmond.

Commissioner Willis expressed anticipation for the workforce analysis and survey results, highlighting the importance of showcasing early successes to improve the City's image in climate resilience and job creation.

- Sustainability Reports (Lead, G. Sewell-Murphy)

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy provided a brief update, noting concerns about securing a fiscal sponsor for the expo event. She had contacted former Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, who suggested exploring potential sponsors like Urban Tilth and Groundwork. Chair Kenney highlighted that Council Liaison Robinson is the Executive Director of Urban Tilth.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also inquired if the EDC would support a primarily virtual event for the Taste of Richmond, but Chair Kenney confirmed it must be an in-person event. She further asked whether a fiscal sponsor would still be needed if no fees were involved, to which Ms. Zepeda emphasized the importance of a sponsor due to insurance and liability concerns.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy mentioned she was continuing outreach to Chevron and Contra Costa County representatives while the fiscal sponsor issue was being resolved. Chair Kenney clarified that the fiscal sponsor was only necessary for the expo, and while recommendations for Groundwork and Urban Tilth were made, a sponsor would be identified.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy also shared personal news about her daughter's health, which may affect her availability. Council Liaison Robinson inquired about the funding for the Taste of Richmond and expo, and Chair Kenney confirmed there was no budget for the expo yet but expected to request funding from the City Council, with the Taste of Richmond transitioning to a sponsorship model in 2025.

Council Liaison Robinson urged early funding requests, as the City Council would soon adopt a list of events. Chair Kenney agreed to provide an itemized budget for the Taste of Richmond. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy expressed interest in involving local schools and suggested the book *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do To Save the Earth* as a resource.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked about the City's requirements for securing a fiscal sponsor. Chair Kenney explained that past fiscal sponsors, like Richmond Main Street for Taste of Richmond, were secured through direct requests and required a business plan and proposed budget for the expo event. She suggested the Sustainability Subcommittee prepare a draft document to present to potential sponsors.

Ms. Zepeda offered staff support for the fiscal sponsorship process, and Council Liaison Robinson suggested reaching out to Marin Clean Energy (MCE) as a potential sponsor. Commissioner Sewell-Murphy confirmed she had additional support for the event from Ms. McLaughlin.

Chair Kenney noted Commissioner Jackson's interest in the Sustainability Subcommittee but acknowledged her health and personal challenges. She offered to assist Commissioner Sewell-Murphy in gathering the necessary documentation for a fiscal sponsor. Vice-Chair Thompson also expressed willingness to help prepare a business plan.

Council Liaison Robinson noted that GEZ Committee meetings were open to the public and encouraged participation. Chair Kenney apologized for the burden on Commissioner Sewell-Murphy and assured the EDC would step up to support the effort.

- Cannabis (Lead, Kerby Lynch)

Commissioner Lynch provided an update on the Cannabis Subcommittee, highlighting the receipt of \$100,000 from CoBiz to continue the Cannabis Equity Grant. However, due to staff transitions and communication breakdowns with the Technical Assistant/Advisor, she requested a point of contact to ensure continued coordination. Commissioner Lynch noted that \$1.2 million in Cannabis Equity Grant funds had been lost due to lack of implementation, although \$600,000 was recently secured. Unfortunately, a February 25, 2025, meeting with the community did not go well, as the Technical Assistant/Advisor's messaging about opportunities demotivated the cannabis equity candidates.

She emphasized the importance of in-person community engagement, as many candidates had difficulty participating in Zoom meetings due to technical issues. Commissioner Lynch requested support from the EDC for in-person meetings at CoBiz to facilitate better communication and collaboration with grant recipients, and suggested potential budget consideration for this effort.

Ms. Beacham introduced new Economic Development staff members and acknowledged the challenges faced but praised the team's efforts in securing the funding. Commissioner Lynch clarified the need for continued coordination, emphasizing that the technical challenges and lack of connection points were impacting the success of the project.

Mr. de Leon reported that staff had met with the Technical Assistant/Advisor and expressed a commitment to streamlining the process for cannabis applicants. He emphasized collaboration with Commissioner Lynch on both the engagement and communication components. Commissioner Lynch reiterated the urgency of moving forward with engagement and implementation to ensure the current grant funds were not lost.

Chair Kenney offered support for in-person efforts and expressed a commitment to advocating for improved communication, recognizing the importance of face-to-face interactions for increased community investment.

7. **Council Liaison Robinson News or Report:** None

Ms. Zepeda acknowledged for the record there had been a quorum of the EDC at 11:54 a.m.

The EDC returned to Item 3 at this time.

8. **Approval of Minutes**

February 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

1st – Thompson, 2nd - Wear, approved unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

9. **Public Comments/Announcements**

Cordell Hindler, a Richmond resident, expressed his satisfaction with public participation in the meeting. He reported plans to attend an upcoming Youth Council meeting to encourage filling EDC vacancies, with hopes that the City Council would address this in May. He also invited attendees to the Contra Costa Mayors' Conference on April 3, 2025, hosted by Clayton at Oakhurst Country Club, with a \$70 ticket and an RSVP deadline of March 17, 2025. Additionally, he noted the Grand Opening of Pacific Storage on March 12 and his intention to present proposals to the Personnel Board during their March 27, 2025 meeting. Hindler further invited everyone to the Richmond Rotary Club event on April 4, 2025, featuring Fiona Ma, with a \$35 ticket.

10. **Closing Comments**

Chair Kenney reminded Commissioners that this was the final month to submit their goals. She planned to agendize an update on the Taste of Richmond for the next meeting, with requests and asks to be submitted to staff. Additionally, she proposed creating a Small Business Subcommittee, which would be voted on at the next EDC meeting. She also extended her wishes for a Happy International Women's History Month.

11. **Adjournment:** 12:45 PM

Next Meeting: **Wednesday, April 9, 2025**