



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**In-Person Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 9, 2025 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM**  
**Richmond Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 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**

**Present:** Chair Kenney, Vice-Chair Thompson and Commissioners Gliksohn, Jackson\*, Wear, Sewell-Murphy and Willis\*  
\*Arrived after Roll Call

**Absent:** Commissioner Lynch

**Council Liaison:** Doria Robinson

**Staff Present:** Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director; Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer; Junne Garcia, Management Analyst; Valerie Li, Sustainability Specialist and Yahna Williamson, Management Analyst

**3. Approval of Minutes**

a. March 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

1<sup>st</sup> - Gliksohn, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Wear, approved unanimously by a Roll Call vote.

**4. Chair Report**

Chair Kenney welcomed new staff member Valerie Li who introduced herself to the Economic Development Commission (EDC) as a member of the Economic Development Department, Environmental Health Initiative Division and an AmeriCorps CivicSpark Fellow.

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

5a. Taste of Richmond

Chair Kenney reported the Taste of Richmond (TOR) forum in 2024 had been very successful with participating restaurants having experienced a 65 percent increase in sales for the day and with some of the restaurants having continued to grow five to ten percent, depending on the restaurant since some were more popular than others. There had been a rush in marketing a business versus having the time to market the business long term and she discussed this and other issues with the TOR Event Manager. TOR would focus on five new restaurants for this season with a new concept plan. The new concept was for Wednesday through Saturday at in-person locations. TOR would also consider those restaurants unable to participate last year.

Every restaurant in Richmond would be invited to provide a menu item for TOR, but it did not guarantee a space at the event.

Chair Kenney recently visited the State of Washington which had a pop-up map that had shown where everything was located in the City of Seattle, which was something she wanted to consider for the City of Richmond and with the only landmarks on the map being restaurants. She described a concept that had been discussed about raising funds where one could purchase a map of restaurants that could cost between \$10 and \$15, and if one patronized a certain number of restaurants during restaurant week, a grand prize could be available from participating restaurants. She would provide the EDC a direct link to PopUpMaps.com.

Chair Kenney reported she also recently attended a Richmond Chamber of Commerce Mixer at which time Councilmember Cesar Zepeda discussed holding a festival of some sort in the same corridor under discussion, with the intent to bring people into the City of Richmond. The desire was to have the TOR Sunday festival located in the cul-de-sac in front of the Ferry Building and block off the entire street. Efforts were being made to work on a partnership with the ferry service and she described some conversations she had universally with Richmond residents and millennials in particular, about festivals they attended that were located in the cities of Oakland and San Francisco but did not serve their age group.

The TOR festival was intended to be a complete street food festival with a stage in the parking lot to the right of the street. The artist LaRussell, had put a call out to perform in the City of Richmond and Chair Kenney had been in contact with Vallejo Main Street which had the artist attend one of its events, to obtain contact information for the artist's team. There were a lot of Richmond artists who did not have a place to perform who were under the age of 30 and who would like to have a presence in the City of Richmond. As an example, Kool John used his platform to go to every major restaurant in the City of Richmond and put them on his platform. She met with him during TOR last year to discuss his concept and possibly have him become the official Ambassador for TOR.

Commissioner Wear understood they had to speak to the ferry service to see if it could operate at other times given the ferry had limited hours of operation.

Chair Kenney acknowledged there was a large gap between the morning and evening ferry services, and on weekends they would likely need special ferry service for the TOR event. She detailed the potential TOR schedule as follows:

- Wednesday - Golden Gate Bistro
- Thursday - Dinner at Masa Tamales & Taqueria
- Friday - Date Night at Biancoverde at Hotel Mac Restaurant
- Saturday - Live Music at Perfusion Vineyard
- Sunday - Festival at the Ferry Building

Chair Kenney added on top of TOR week food education would be introduced. She planned to adapt the City of Richmond's business series into a Business for the City Food Addition, and provide classes for those who had food businesses they wanted to establish. The Richmond Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center was a partner and had a food business series course. She wanted to provide Lunches and Learn, Monday through Friday, where one could come in and learn the basics of food foundations and make the offerings more robust this year.

Chair Kenney explained she was looking at different touch points and economic development that reflected the EDC's goals and wanted to provide experiences, education and connections for food operators in Richmond.

Commissioner Wear commented that TOR was heavily weighted in District 2, whereas the Ferry Building was located in District 5.

Chair Kenney commented on the difficulties of pulling someone from every district, which was why the food festival would invite everyone. She acknowledged there were only so many businesses that were marketable to get people to come to the City of Richmond and she offered examples. She emphasized they were trying to do TOR in a way where the restaurants may not be in every single district, but the festival would involve every restaurant in Richmond. She was also working on a sponsorship opportunity with Richmond Love Your Block and if they were to award the funds she was requesting, she would be able to subsidize all food restaurant tents for the festival. For those food businesses outside of the City of Richmond that wanted to participate in the food festival there would be a fee to participate.

Chair Kenney also highlighted the TOR budget for 2024 where 18,000 had been spent on the event. If using that same model for the 2025 event, the budget would be similar with the exception of the festival budget for four pop-ups, entertainment for the festival, County and City fees, event rental, signage, staffing, kids' activities, event planning, marketing, social media and merchandise (in-house team graphic designer) where the costs would be approximately \$40,000 (\$39,800). If moving forward with the festival, the event planning cost would increase from \$5,000 (paid in 2024) to \$8,000. She clarified she would keep her fee what it was since most of her marketing materials consist of updates. There would be an increase in concept creation due to the festival since she needed a team, not an individual on the ground, and she anticipated a social media team on the ground would be working all day.

Chair Kenney hoped to get feedback on the concept to allow a proposal to be prepared and submitted for TOR to become an official event for the City of Richmond. She also highlighted the sponsorship partnerships she was in contact with and anticipated for TOR along with any other partnerships the EDC may determine could be effective. She was currently working on the sponsorship deck now, so they would know what money they were working with for an October time period, with the dates yet to be finalized.

On the discussion of potential dates for TOR in the month of October 2025, Chair Kenney commented that Spirit and Soul would also be held in the month of October and TOR following that event would be great energy for the City of Richmond.

Council Liaison Robinson asked what funds the City of Richmond would be asked to provide for the TOR budget, and Chair Kenney commented in 2024, \$10,000 had been awarded from the General Fund, but ideally she sought between \$15,000 to \$20,000 for this year's event. She clarified that \$5,000 of the \$18,000 spent for the 2024 event had been given to the businesses.

Council Liaison Robinson stated she would advocate for the City Council to award the higher amount.

Economic Development Director, Nannette Beacham identified two major upcoming events that were heavily attended including Cinco de Mayo and Juneteenth. She acknowledged the Cinco de Mayo parade had been changed to the month of September in 2024, and she asked the EDC to keep that in mind when considering the TOR festival.

Chair Kenney suggested the TOR festival be considered for October 19, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., contingent upon what the ferry service was willing to provide in terms of transportation.

Commissioner Willis stated if the City did not have direct contact for the ferry services he could provide some information. He liked the idea of Kool John being the Ambassador for TOR and advised when the artist patronized Angels Café a couple of months ago, he posted it on Tik Tok and the business had experienced a significant increase.

Commissioner Jackson commended the Chair on all of the work done for TOR to benefit the community.

Chair Kenney appreciated the comments, thanked the EDC for the trust and allowing her to lead and Chair the TOR.

Commissioner Wear asked about the status of Rigger's Loft Wine Company, expressed concern the business was being ignored, although geographically it was not that far away from the proposed festival location and she wondered if it should be folded in.

Chair Kenney explained Rigger's Loft's challenges ran far too deep for the EDC and she suggested if they were to put in a lot of energy in that business it would take away from everything they were trying to do for other food businesses.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy noted before COVID, Rigger's Loft had been the focus for TOR. She was glad it was no longer the focus since it was out of the way and people had gotten lost.

Commissioner Gliksohn questioned including other restaurants that may not be located in the City of Richmond. He referenced a [San Francisco Chronicle](#) article about restaurants located in the City of Richmond which he was of the opinion put the City on the map.

Chair Kenney clarified while they did not have to include non-Richmond restaurants, it was a consideration and this was an opportunity to show the energy of Richmond and for people to see that Richmond was a viable place to build and invest. What made TOR a success in 2024 was its robust marketing strategy and duplicating that effort and making it bigger was the focus.

Commissioner Willis commented it made sense to have a marketing event for other prospective businesses to come to Richmond.

Chair Kenney expressed the willingness to contact Perfusion Vineyard to see whether the winery could host the EDC prior to the TOR event to allow the owner to tell his story. She would also reach out to the TOR Subcommittee members very soon.

5b. Cannabis Equity Ordinance

Senior Business Assistance Officer Jesson de Leon, provided the background of the Cannabis Equity Ordinance, which was currently being spearheaded by the Planning Department which was making changes to the ordinance in order to accommodate the Cannabis Equity Program. Twenty-one applicants were being verified for qualification in the Cannabis Equity Program, which qualified applicants for priorities such as permit processing and potential grant opportunities. The State recently awarded the City of Richmond a \$600,000 grant and in order to use the funds they need to pass the amendments to the ordinance. Staff was working with the Planning Department to get those amendments to the City Council to make that happen.

Commissioner Wear asked whether Commissioner Lynch was still working with staff on this effort, to which Mr. de Leon confirmed staff had communicated with Commissioner Lynch about the process and staff was still familiarizing themselves with the ordinance.

Commissioner Jackson asked about the timeline when applicants may see the program move forward, and Mr. de Leon reiterated staff was working with the Planning Department and had a target of the next 90-days to present amendments to the City Council. The last time the ordinance had been presented to the City Council was in 2023. Since that time, there had been new staff in the Planning and Economic Development Departments and they all had to familiarize themselves with the ordinance. The grant the City received starts July 1, 2025 and the funds must be expended by October 2026.

Ms. Beacham added between 2023 and 2024 staff had to return the money to the state, but they did not have to do that this time since the City requested less money to ensure the program could be managed correctly. She acknowledged there were concerns with the status of the program, with staff to reach out and re-engage with the applicants about the status of the timeline. It was hoped by the next application period the City could request more funding for more applicants.

Commissioner Jackson was pleased staff would re-engage with the applicants and the program was still moving forward.

Mr. de Leon also reported when he came on board, he learned Small Business week nationwide was held May 4 through May 10, 2025. He and the staff team were engaging with the City's business partners including Richmond Main Street, Richmond Chamber of Commerce and CoBiz in order to have a plan in place in the next month. The intent was to mimic what had been done in 2024, including Lunch and Learn, partner with the Mobile Vendor Program for a Saturday and end-of-the-week celebration, with more materials to be provided in the next week to allow marketing to commence. Tentatively, the schedule was to start on Monday, May 5, 2025 with more programming and have the City's purchasing department have a Lunch and Learn about how to become a vendor and work with the City, with events by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce and CoBiz to culminate with the Mobile Vendor Program.

Commissioner Wear asked about the role of the EDC for the event.

Mr. de Leon suggested marketing would be the key with the focus for the finalized schedule to be presented to the EDC in the next week.

Commissioner Wear recognized that TOR was a large thrust for the EDC. She asked whether there was a way to get around having only a couple of people serve on a subcommittee because of the Brown Act requirements.

Commissioner Wear pointed out the EDC was not making large financial decisions and having only a couple of people work on these events was insufficient. She sought a way to work around that requirement.

Ms. Beacham would have to check to determine whether or not that was possible.

Chair Kenney agreed that staff look into the matter. From a contractual standpoint, for TOR as an example, one person had much of the burden to do the logistical planning but there were things where others would like to provide assistance but she had been unable to add members to the subcommittee.

## **6. Subcommittee Reports**

### **a. Sustainability – Lead: Sewell-Murphy**

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy stated a year or so ago, she had proposed the Sustainable Expo be held around mid-September. Given the City had other events in the same month, she suggested the Sustainable Expo be held around Earth Day. At this time, there was no fiscal sponsor for the event for this year and with the City's focus on TOR, she found it unrealistic to plan for an initial entry for this September and she sought feedback from the EDC.

Chair Kenney preferred not to postpone the event but recognized it may be better to hold the event during the month of April and bring back balance to the EDC to have marquee events in the first and second half of the year. She agreed it made more sense to hold off for this year.

Council Liaison Robinson reported she had reached out to Marin Clean Energy (MCE) about being a fiscal sponsor for the event and had provided contact information to Commissioner Sewell-Murphy via email. In the event MCE was not interested in being a fiscal sponsor, as a backup, she also spoke with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, which placed an item on an upcoming Board of Directors meeting agenda to ask whether or not the Chamber of Commerce was willing to be a fiscal sponsor for the Sustainable Expo.

Chair Kenney suggested that was a good look since they wanted the Chamber of Commerce's presence back on the EDC.

Council Liaison Robinson suggested with the possibly of two interested fiscal sponsors, having a year to plan the event well was a good thing.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked to be copied on any communications Council Liaison Robinson received from MCE and the Chamber of Commerce.

Vice-Chair Thompson commented while he was reluctant to defer the event, April was the perfect time and the connection with Earth Day and sustainability was important. He had started to prepare a business plan to identify the goals, objectives and concept of operation and the resources required to secure a fiscal sponsor and would coordinate that with Commissioner Sewell-Murphy.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy explained the primary mission of the Richmond Sustainability Business and Industrial Expo was to explore how the City of Richmond's current sustainability network could continue to be integrated into segments of business, community and urban farmers and the expo could be seen as important for the City's increased exposure to innovations, industry experts and Richmond's future image rebranding.

Commissioner Willis asked that the information be submitted to the EDC, and Commissioner Sewell-Murphy advised she would forward the statement to the EDC.

Vice-Chair Thompson commented that Commissioner Sewell-Murphy had previously prepared a one-page summary of the concept of the expo which had been distributed in May 2024. He understood that information could be resent.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy wanted to highlight and focus on sustainability in the community and the efforts of Richmond businesses, non-profits and those pioneering those efforts over the years to give them some kind of certificate of recognition from the City. As a former educator, it was very important to involve young people as soon as possible in terms of trying to think of sustainability.

Chair Kenney reported that Earth Day in 2026 would be Wednesday, April 11, 2026. She asked if the intent was to hold the expo on a weekend.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy suggested the expo be held on a Saturday.

There was a discussion that the expo be held the week before Earth Day but not compete with other Earth Day events, with April 18, 2026 officially scheduled on calendar as the date for the expo.

Council Liaison Robinson commented on the Green Empowerment Zone (GEZ) process, and identification of existing larger scale industrial sustainable businesses and the efforts to draw more such businesses into Contra Costa County. She asked for a placeholder amount and "ask for funds" for the expo event.

Chair Kenney suggested a placeholder amount of \$10,000 be identified and if a presentation was needed for the City Council, expressed the willingness to work with Council Liaison Robinson. She could also provide the old deck for the 2024 TOR.

Council Liaison Robinson suggested a brief paragraph for both the TOR and the Sustainable Expo would be helpful and the Chair expressed the willingness to provide the information.

Mr. de Leon announced Commissioner Lynch was available via Zoom but the next Subcommittee Report had not been agendaized as a remote presentation and given the Brown Act requirements, a presentation could not be provided by Commissioner Lynch at this time.

Chair Kenney asked Commissioner Lynch to text her any information that could be provided to the EDC.

b. Cannabis – Lead: Lynch

There was no report.

c. Policy & GBND – Lead: Willis

Commissioner Willis reported over the past month the Policy & Green Blue New Deal (GBND) Subcommittee had reviewed the City's Workforce Report, which was exclusively focused on City staff with recommendations for hiring on certain teams. Pursuant to the Report, the City was understaffed and there was a recommendation to hire Full Time Employees (FTEs), which as something that would help support some of the priorities of the EDC. He found the Report to be useful and encouraged everyone to review it.

Yahna Williamson, Management Analyst, explained that she created presentation slides for clarity of the results of the GBND Opportunities Report and Appendices along with the GBND Survey and next steps. City staff and community members were conducting additional research on the projects listed in the Report which have an implementation timeline over the next five years (2030). City staff, the EDC and Workforce Development Board had been surveyed to develop five priority projects, which subsequently turned into seven priority projects, which had been prioritized based on feedback received. Staff also reached out to Department Heads to obtain their feedback on the seven projects.

The seven projects that received the most votes included: Poor Upgrades; Building Electrification Retrofits; Brown Field Research and Innovation Project; Destination Downtown; Transition to Zero Emission Vehicles; Off-shore Wind Manufacturing and Green Accessory Dwellings. Project descriptions and next steps and the actual scope of work would be refined for each project to determine how it would work out in practice, to be brought back to the EDC for feedback.

Council Liaison Robinson reported the port was undergoing a facilities assessment which would inform the goals in the Report. The City has not prepared a comprehensive facilities assessment of the port in years and after the assessment a Master Plan process for the port would be prepared by the Port Director.

Commissioner Wear questioned why the port was part of the GBND since the port was such a large project.

Council Liaison Robinson advised the port had been included given the ample opportunities and potential jobs in the maritime industry and other opportunities, which could not be named until an assessment was done.

Commissioner Jackson commented on the previous feedback from the prior survey and asked where workforce development would follow. She wanted to see where that fell within all seven priorities since she saw some intersectionality. She wanted to make sure the community was at the forefront of some of those opportunities.

Ms. Williamson confirmed staff had received that feedback as well. Based on feedback from Department Heads, there was a recommendation to integrate more workforce development. She highlighted the feedback received on each of the seven priorities and commented that while poor upgrades was the top priority, the recommendation for off-shore wind manufacturing had received concerns with respect to feasibility due to the port size and infrastructure constraints. While some aspects may be incorporated into the broader port upgrades, there was a thought to combine those two projects. In terms of the building electrification retrofits, it was supported as it aligned with existing City goals, reduced costs and provided workforce development opportunities.

Green accessory dwellings required further clarification to ensure they aligned with City policies and did not introduce unintended consequences, and this project could also be combined with building electrification retrofits. For Brown Field Research and Innovation, while a priority project, a better description of the scope of work was recommended. The information in the Report was a guiding document to draft the scope of work for each of the projects, with the next step to bring that information to the EDC for review and additional feedback.

Ms. Beacham explained that staff had been very detail-oriented to get the project underway but it had taken longer than expected and it would be a period of time before it went to the City Council.

Ms. Williamson further clarified that meetings were upcoming to gauge staff capacity on the timelines and she had no definite time for when it would be completed, but it would be completed soon.

Ms. Beacham reiterated they were also in the midst of a comprehensive facilities assessment and they could not do a Strategic Plan until that work was complete. What the projects would entail including pricing would be included in the Strategic Plan, which would not occur until later in the year.

Vice-Chairperson Thompson noted some of the scope of work would not involve the port and he wanted to know when there would be a reasonable concrete scope of work.

Council Liaison Robinson reported the Facilities Assessment may be done in July 2025, but the Strategic Plan would not be done until 2026.

Commissioner Willis looked forward to the next consideration of the information. He otherwise asked when GEZ meetings were held to see where there was alignment. As to the five priorities, he understood they may shift after the assessments and he asked if the EDC was being asked to continue to review the top five priorities. He suggested staff leverage the expertise of the EDC when considering proposals. As to Brown Field Research and Innovation, he understood at one time there were federal funds available but that may no longer be the case with the new Administration.

Commissioner Willis also highlighted a pilot program created by Roots of Success in 2024, around green literacy education for youth, and a detailed report in response to the Inflation Reduction Act. The person who prepared the report could be invited to make a presentation to the EDC.

## **7. Council Liaison Robinson News or Report**

Council Liaison Robinson reported the next GEZ meeting had been scheduled for May 16, 2025, 30 Muir Road, Room 2A, in the City of Martinez at 9:30 a.m., with more information on the County website. She briefed the EDC on the discussions of the last GEZ meeting, including a presentation from Congressman Garamendi and encouraged interested persons to attend the next GEZ meeting. She added the City Council would be holding upcoming budget meetings.

Chair Kenney moved to extend the EDC meeting for 10 minutes. (There was no second or Roll Call vote.)

Council Liaison Robinson reiterated her efforts to make connections to find a fiscal sponsor for the Sustainable Expo. She also referenced the City's unfunded liability and the desire to improve staffing, as it related to funds from the Chevron Settlement and how the auditor looked at the use of those funds as one-time funds that should not be used for ongoing expenses like staffing. The City Council was considering ways to get around that and had been approached by the unions who offered an interesting proposal, using the settlement funds instead of General Fund monies to pay for the unfunded liabilities since General Fund monies could be used for other items like staffing. The unions suggested if the City paid down its unfunded liability debt faster the City could possibly realize substantial dollars coming into the City through savings and interest and after 10 years not only would the City save money it could see significant funds that were spent each year freed up as part of the General Fund. The City Council directed staff to explore this option further and assess its feasibility.

Council Liaison Robinson further reported the Rigger's Loft Wine Company decision was difficult and she had posted details she was able to share on her personal social media accounts along with links to the official statement from the City. She encouraged everyone to view the information or she could share it via email.

**8. Public Comments/Announcements**

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, invited the EDC to the Bay Front Chamber of Commerce Mixer, April 22, 2025 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Berkeley Country Club, \$15 per person, with refreshments to be served; and the Contra Costa Mayors' Conference, May 1, 2025 hosted by the City of Pleasant Hill, \$70 per person. He otherwise asked whether venues could be alternated for EDC meetings. He suggested Masa Tamales & Taqueria would be a perfect location to host EDC meetings. He added he offered some of his economic development ideas to the Personnel Board at its March meeting and asked that the Workforce Analysis be agendized for the next EDC meeting.

Chair Kenney stated she would take the recommendation for alternate meeting locations into consideration and possibly a meeting towards the end of the year could be held off-site.

Kevin Guyun, a member of Americorps, stated he wanted to attend the meeting to see what was happening in the City. He was new to the area and planned to attend future meetings where he could share more about himself.

**9. Closing Comments: None**

**10. Adjournment: 1:06 p.m.**