



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 10, 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: 11:32 a.m. by Vice-Chair Thompson

2. Roll Call & Check In

Present: Vice-Chair Thompson and Commissioners Gliksohn, Robinson, Wear, Willis Sewell-Murphy*
*Arrived at 11:34 a.m.

Absent: Jackson, Lynch and Council Liaison Doria Robinson

Staff Present: Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director; Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer; and Junne Garcia, Management Analyst

Senior Business Assistance Officer Jesson de Leon reported there had been a request to move Item 5(d) up on the agenda since Dr. Ayoka Nurse, Executive Director, Urban Soyol had a hard stop at noon, and with the Vice-Chair's approval the item would be heard at this time.

5. Old and/or New Business

d. Request for Letter of Support – Urban Soyol Foundation

Dr. Ayoka Nurse, Executive Director, Urban Soyol, a lifelong Richmond resident, who launched and formed Urban Soyol, a non-profit organization that worked to restore the balance between people, plants and policy and restore social health and environmental harm caused by inequitable cannabis laws, detailed her background as a former Economic Development Commission (EDC) Commissioner and Chair of the Cannabis Subcommittee. She reported that Urban Soyol was the first Black-owned cannabis dispensary in Contra Costa County and they made it through the Advisory Board and final stages of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for an applied study, which was her background as a policy analyst for federal, state and local jurisdictions.

The purpose of Urban Soyol's Cannabis Restoration Program was to protect fish and wildlife in sensitive habitats, especially around wastewater facilities and watersheds. The Restoration Fund provided mediation, compliance and research that reduced environmental harm. Urban Soyol, had applied for the study based off the problem and was looking at both the cities of Richmond and Sacramento, which had the United Core Alliance in which Urban Soyol was in collaboration.

Dr. Nurse explained that the problem was indoor cannabis cultivation operated within aging municipal infrastructure never designed for cultivation waste. No comprehensive study linked cannabis waste to municipal water or landfill systems and small and equity operators faced rural-oriented standards while leasing older, non-compliant facilities. Those facilities were often concentrated in high-burden, environmentally overexposed, economically disadvantaged communities.

Urban Soyol had looked at the area of North Richmond where a number of the cannabis cultivators were located and which were close to watersheds feeding to the City of Richmond and throughout Contra Costa County. This work mattered since it responded to priorities identified by the U.C. Berkeley Cannabis

Research Center and the State Water Board, and protected local watersheds including San Pablo, Morrison, Dry Creek and the American River, strengthening the Cannabis Restoration Grant Program goals of restoration, sustainability and equity inclusion, and also linked environmental protection with equitable economic opportunities.

Dr. Nurse provided an overall snapshot of North Richmond which was in the 90th percentile, the highest percentile for hazardous solid waste, impaired water and ongoing pollution. Urban Soyol wanted to highlight this fact and why it was so important support from the EDC mattered, since it would demonstrate the City of Richmond's partnership in strengthening environmental compliance; align the City's priorities for equity, economic development and responsible industry oversight; and support of sustainable and safer cannabis operations in urban environments. The benefits to the City of Richmond supporting this effort included stronger data, improved safety and oversight, equity support, policy advancement, environmental protection and economic stability. The membership of the Urban Soyol Foundation Board of Directors was also highlighted.

Dr. Nurse asked the EDC to consider a Letter of Support for this effort, with a draft letter having been included in the agenda packet for consideration.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked whether the Letter of Support was required by the organization issuing the grant and whether Urban Soyol was competing with other organizations for the grant.

Dr. Nurse stated while not a requirement, she did not see she could have a successful study without having a Letter of Support from the City of Richmond since the City was aware of what was being done. She needed EDC support to facilitate her contact with some of the cultivators to inform them this was not punitive and they were all on the same page saving the environment. She had informed the Advisory Board a Letter of Support from the EDC was pending and this issue had already gone through the Advisory Board. While a Letter of Support had not been weighted as part of the grant, it would make a difference. She added the way the process worked, a pre-application was required. Her application had been chosen since the applied study would be the first comprehensive study to look at cultivation sites in urban areas and no one else was doing this type of study.

Commissioner Wear asked about the fiscal impacts to the request and was informed there were none.

Commissioner Willis found the request was being made for all of the right reasons, but asked whether there was any reticence from the cultivators to participate in this effort.

Dr. Nurse advised that one of the projects she was currently involved was the Cannabis Reinvestment Program out of Sacramento, where she was evaluating that entire program and was in contact with the cultivators in Sacramento who were excited about this effort as well as Core Alliance, the group the City of Richmond worked with on the Cannabis Equity Program. There had been no push back from the cultivators who wanted to see change and more direction. This effort was also strictly voluntary and allowed Urban Soyol to go in and see the process. She clarified there were four total licenses in the high-risk area, and given the history of the City of Richmond, those locations were in warehouses pre-dating many of the environmental restrictions. Again, she did not foresee much resistance from the cannabis community and stated the effort had been well received in Sacramento.

Commissioner Gliksohn asked about the connection to the Cannabis Equity program the City of Richmond was working on.

Dr. Nurse stated she had been the former Chair of the Cannabis Subcommittee, had gone to the City Council in 2019, and had gotten the request to get the ordinance approved. When asked, she was unaware of the status of CoBiz funding and whether this could be leveraged with the state, but she was more than happy

to work with the Cannabis Subcommittee to show this to the state if it would help in terms of getting the Equity Program back on track. As part of that effort, she would start with the Equity Program stopping current operators from getting more licenses and being open to equity applicants.

Commissioner Wear suggested this effort could dovetail with the standing committee of the Policy & Green, Blue New Deal (GBND) Subcommittee, and it would make good sense since they could be veering off of the standing Cannabis Subcommittee. As such, it made sense for the Policy & GBND Subcommittee to be in collaboration with Urban Soyal for communications, updates and support.

Dr. Nurse encouraged the EDC to continue the Cannabis Subcommittee given the City of Richmond was starting to become one of the only cities with similar demographics to other cities with cannabis, but the only one absent an Equity Program, which did not look good, particularly with the knowledge of what it took to run a cannabis business without an Equity Program, which had been done in Contra Costa County. It was possible the City of Richmond had enough weight to approach the County and urge the County to consider an Equity Program.

Commissioner Gliksohn commented while the EDC may not continue with a Cannabis Subcommittee, it was not the same as the City not considering an Equity Program.

Dr. Nurse noted it was still in the Economic Development Department. She commented she had helped the City of Daly City on their equity assessment and that community was due to go through implementation now. She suggested the majority of the City of Richmond's City Council would be supportive.

Vice-Chair Thompson reiterated the request for the EDC to send a Letter of Support for the Urban Soyal project, which request carried unanimously by a Voice Vote of those present.

Dr. Nurse hoped to have an update in late January 2026.

Vice-Chair Thompson added a member of the EDC would reach out to Dr. Nurse about wordsmithing the final Letter of Support.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

1st - Gliksohn, 2nd – Wear, approved unanimously by a Voice Vote.

4. Chair's Report

Vice-Chair Thompson reported Chair Christina Kenney had resigned her position as the Chair in November. He recognized her many contributions to the EDC and the City of Richmond and her successful Taste of Richmond (TOR) event in 2024. He personally would miss her constructive energy and the enthusiasm brought to the economic development efforts.

Vice-Chair Thompson added the meeting agenda included subcommittee reports, presentation/discussion from Commissioner Wear for a pilot project to review how the EDC did its business, possibly a report from Council Liaison Robinson, once she arrived, public comment and Election of Officers.

5. Old and/or New Business

- a. Resignation of Commissioner Christina Kenney

Report presented.

b. Nomination/Election of New Officers – Chair and Vice-Chair

The nomination period was opened.

Commissioners Sewell-Murphy and Wear expressed interest in serving as the Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Wear wanted to serve as the Vice-Chair of the EDC. She had served as Chair in the past and her goal as the Vice-Chair would be to facilitate EDC meetings that offered substantive discussions and facilitated conversations that lifted up all voices around the table while helping the EDC to stay on track and move agendas forward towards progress.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy stated she had not prepared a statement, but as the Founding Chair of the Sustainability Expo, she suggested this was something that could help to motivate the EDC and consider an innovative approach as it moved forward. As a member of the EDC since 2019, she suggested it was time she took on an additional role on the EDC.

Mr. de Leon clarified the role of the Chair and Vice-Chair had been outlined in the attachment in the agenda packet, which had come from the EDC Handbook, identified in the section Duties of Officers.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked to be considered as Chair. He looked forward to the EDC partnering with the City Council, the Mayor and City staff in an effort to enhance economic vitality in the City of Richmond and promote the prosperity of its citizens. As the Chair of the EDC, he planned to establish goals and accountability measures for the EDC. Goals should focus on promoting sustainable economic development, creating more high-road job opportunities for residents, and ensure the advice to the City on economic matters was timely, substantive and data driven.

There were no further nominations.

Don Thompson was elected unanimously by a hand vote, to serve as the **Chair** of the EDC for 2026.

A vote was taken to consider **Gloria Sewell-Murphy** as the **Vice-Chair** of the EDC for 2026, with Commissioner Sewell-Murphy the single hand vote in support.

A vote was taken to consider **Diana Wear** as the **Vice-Chair** of the EDC for 2026, with three hand votes in support.

Mr. de Leon clarified after the vote for Vice-Chair that Diana Wear would serve as the Vice-Chair of the EDC for 2026.

c. Boards and Commissions Proposal – Commissioner Wear

Commissioner Wear reported she had prepared a written statement for the Richmond Board and Commissions Revitalization Program, which included an overview of her background as a member of the EDC. During that time, she had witnessed when meetings were bogged down in formalities keeping the EDC from making progress or reaching goals, and efforts had been diluted by having Commissioners formally sit on small committees with no expectations or follow through. Many former Commissioners had left the EDC due to lack of direction, purpose or progress during their time on the EDC. She also had conversations with people who served on other Boards and Commissions to determine what worked for them and what did not work.

Commissioner Wear explained she had reached out to the Mayor's Office with a proposal to revitalize and rebuild EDC meetings to help it reach its goals and become more dynamic and fruitful. The Mayor's Office approved her proposal and suggested the EDC use her proposal as a Pilot Program. The Pilot Program aimed to help the EDC to reimagine its work, be inspired to individually step up to new challenges and become more active participants for the economic development of the City.

Commissioner Wear suggested the EDC needed to expand its vision and expectations and enhance the personal skills of its membership as it learned to take on new responsibilities. This could be achieved by creating a new working Mission Statement that was expected to take one session. The Commission was asked to spend time between now and the new year to reflect on what the membership wanted to see from the EDC, how it wanted to commit its time, energy and focus on the Commission, ideas to present something new and what programs or initiatives the EDC already engaged in that would benefit from each Commissioner's knowledge and skill.

Also, each Commissioner served on a standing subcommittee that would have specific needs, and Commissioners should strive to have meetings that actively engaged everyone, focused on effective discussion and discernment, shifted to providing written reports for record keeping to allow more time for substantive group discussions, set goals, deliverables and measures of accountability with calendar dates for assessment as individual Commissioners as well as a collective committee, and show some progress and real concrete tangible results.

Commissioner Wear stated currently there were only one or two people on a couple of the standing committees with no stated goals, follow up or structures of accountability and the EDC needed calls for new people to become involved in these ventures, and they may want to focus efforts on fewer areas and better utilize the expertise or interests of current Commissioners. The EDC also needed to recruit and find better ways to incorporate more people into ongoing projects, mentor new Commissioners who may want to come on the Commission and recruit new Commissioners. The EDC also needed to consider City ordinances for boards and commissions and recommend amendments to the City Council that could be considered for implementation for other City Boards and Commissions, that could better serve the Mayor's Office and the City Council's strategic goals as well as save money and other resources.

Commissioner Wear explained the Pilot Program aimed to help the EDC to become more functional and effective civic partners in the economic development of the City of Richmond.

Vice-Chair Thompson found features of the Pilot Program to be interesting. He recognized the EDC must prescribe to organizational behavior when conducting business and Robert's Rules of Orders, but the EDC did not create ordinances but offered advice, an important responsibility. The EDC also only met 18-hours a year. To give good sound data driven advise on economic matters, the EDC must speak with each other, negotiate and discuss with each other.

Vice-Chair Thompson pointed out that the rules on the establishment of working groups and standing committees stifled that effort, which was why some of the standing subcommittees had few members. He asked whether the EDC could implement the best procedures to conduct its business.

Commissioner Wear noted the process for official changes, such as for a standing committee, would have to go to the City Council, which was why Council Liaison Robinson would always be copied on anything the EDC did and any recommended changes. Together they could work out what was best to move agenda items forward.

Alyssa Ching, a prospective member of the EDC, appreciated the call out on the Pilot Program and committing the EDC to establish goals. She asked whether the goal was to amplify small businesses in the

City of Richmond or determine the goals within the EDC, and whether the mayor's agenda and priorities aligned with the EDC goals.

Commissioner Wear suggested a Mission Statement be considered in January, and at that time they could see who was sitting around the table and who had particular interests. She again commented the current standing subcommittees had not always been effective, with few members, which needed to be discussed. In 2024, the City Council identified six strategic goals which the EDC could review to see where they connected.

Commissioner Gliksohn clarified with Commissioner Wear that she had buy-in from the Mayor and no action was needed from the EDC for approval. If the EDC were to consider the Pilot Program, he wanted transparency on what the EDC was doing with reports to the Mayor's Office and City Council. Other than the Mission Statement and identifying goals for the EDC, changing the nature of committees and the like was not under the purview of the EDC and would require City Council approval, which could take time.

Commissioner Wear suggested the first step was to consider the goals and deliverables, which would be recorded in the meeting minutes, and they would then have follow through with assessments to be tracked by calendar dates.

Commissioner Gliksohn asked about the length of the Pilot Program, and Commissioner Wear advised the program was intended to be for one year and she confirmed it could be offered as a template.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy noted the Cannabis Subcommittee had initially been very active, was the first committee she had been on, and there had been three or four members.

Commissioner Wear noted that currently standing committees were only allowed up to three members. She added that cannabis was not one of the major goals for the City in terms of strategic planning.

Vice-Chair Thompson suggested a Mission Statement and development and goal identification task be launched during the January EDC meeting, with the Mission Statement to conform to essentially the EDC's job description, what the EDC did, along with the duties of the officers and documentation. He hoped the goals would advance the City's strategic goal areas and include the things Commissioners wanted to do when they signed up for the EDC. He hoped over the course of the next couple of months, the goals and a Mission Statement could be defined.

6. Subcommittee Reports

a. Sustainability – Lead: Sewell-Murphy

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy confirmed Commissioners had received a document she prepared about how Commissioners and City staff could be more active in the Sustainability Expo. She otherwise commented that during the prior meeting, staff reported a trust account could not be considered for the Sustainability Expo since it was not part of the EDC ordinance. Given the changes Commissioner Wear was now proposing, she asked whether a trust account could be considered as a change in the City's ordinance.

Mr. de Leon clarified a fiscal sponsor could be considered for one or two years. He added the second page of the agenda packet included the Richmond Municipal Code (RMC) guidelines regarding the EDC. If it was the will of the EDC to modify the RMC, Council Liaison Robinson would have to be asked to agendize a request with the City Council. Staff would draft the request and run it through the City Clerk and City Attorney's Offices and the time period for such a request would involve two readings of an ordinance before the City Council, which at a minimum could take 60-days or longer.

Mr. de Leon further clarified, when asked, that a trust account would be managed through the City's Finance Department, as a checking account, accounted for by the City itself. He also highlighted the process and formation for the Commission on Aging, which had a trust account, but which Commission also included a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, an appointed Commissioner who wrote out checks subject to approval from that Commission, and with the Treasurer required to provide a reporting system.

The EDC discussed the differences and/or benefits between a trust account and fiscal sponsor, with concern a trust account could bring in more responsibility, less oversight and less help, with efficiency the key rather than a piecemeal approach, and with staff clarifying a trust account could be used for multiple items.

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Jamin Pursell, a prospective member of the EDC, had a back-and-forth conversation with the EDC and City staff about the topic of a trust account or a fiscal sponsor and related budget questions, and staff provided responses to the inquiries.

Commissioner Willis asked whether a trust account had to use City-approved vendors.

Nannette Beacham, Economic Development Director, explained a business license and all of the contracts the City required for a business to operate in the City of Richmond would be needed.

Vice-Chair Thompson suggested the topic of a fiscal sponsor and trust account could be folded into the Pilot Program in terms of review in the way the EDC did business to determine whether or not the EDC wanted to change things.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy otherwise reported she had no information on the status of a fiscal sponsor for the Sustainability Expo and stated she had no update from City staff.

Mr. de Leon confirmed he had reached out to Marin Clean Energy (MCE) but had no response. He could reach out again but it would be up to the Sustainability Subcommittee to reach out to other potential fiscal sponsors.

Ms. Beacham and Mr. de Leon advised they would have to research what City funds may have been allocated for the Sustainability Expo.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy reported she had reached out to some people interested in helping to coordinate the event. If the City provided \$10,000 for the event, she asked if someone was still needed to deal with the money, which staff confirmed was the case.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked the EDC to provide input and once there was a fiscal sponsor, she had a Zoom account and could start meeting with subcommittee members. She also asked about the status of waiving the fee for the Sustainability Expo and was informed by staff it was in the process.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy commented she had spoken with a member of City staff who confirmed with her the location for the Sustainability Expo event had been reserved. She added the Climate Justice Task Force, of which she was a member, was interested in participating in the event. She hoped to have a list of people who wanted to be involved in the event ready for the January 2026 EDC meeting. In addition, she had spoken with Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia via text about the event.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked Mr. de Leon between now and the end of the week to contact MCE and confirm the amount of money authorized by the City for the Sustainability Expo and inform him and Commissioners Sewell-Murphy and Willis about the status.

Commissioner Willis reported once they were aware of a fiscal sponsor for the Sustainability Expo, they would have to hire a planner to get the project across the finish line. He asked whether or not staff could provide assistance and coordination for the subcommittee meetings to be able to have engagement with the staff team as much as possible.

Commissioner Willis also acknowledged the EDC had toured the Viridi Parente facility in October. He had not been able to participate in that tour but had visited the facility in the last week, mentioned the Sustainability Expo, and had a follow up meeting with a former employee of the facility who was now running a group doing promotion for the clean energy sector in the Bay Area and who also wanted to participate in the Sustainability Expo. He suggested one way to attract speakers and possible vendors was re-engagement with the East Bay Economic Development Alliance and he would be happy to make that connection.

b. Cannabis – Lead: Lynch

There was no report.

c. Policy & GBND – Lead: Willis

Commissioner Willis inquired of the status of the five-year plan for the Economic Development Department given there had been some discussion to incorporate some of the elements of the GBND into the plan.

Ms. Beacham reported the plan was not a priority at this time. An update on the GBND had been presented to the City Council on December 2, 2025, had been well received and could be shared with the EDC.

Commissioner Willis added during the last EDC meeting, Council Liaison Robinson reported on her visit to Kalamazoo, Michigan to attend the PromiseNet Conference, a national gathering of the tuition-free college movement.

Commissioner Willis stated the City of Richmond was positioned well to follow in the footsteps of pursuing Promise Neighborhood funding, with the Richmond Promise Program focused on college access, and with the next iteration to focus on other cradle to career pathways. There was a lot of funding for workforce development and whether or not there were public funds available, there was always philanthropy that could fill in the gaps. The Policy & GBND Subcommittee could help with the analysis of funds and strategies.

Commissioner Willis further reported on the five priority project areas approved by the City Council for the GBND, and destination downtown had been selected as the one that made the most sense for the Policy & GBND Subcommittee to work on.

Vice-Chair Thompson asked about the status of TOR.

Commissioner Wear asked why Vernon Whitmore, Executive Director, Richmond Chamber of Commerce (RCOC) had not been shown on the meeting agenda as a member of the EDC.

Mr. de Leon advised the fiscal sponsorship for TOR had not been executed and was still pending with the RCOC. He also clarified the RCOC did not have a seat on the EDC.

Ms. Beacham acknowledged there had been a Commissioner from the RCOC on the EDC in the past, but when that person left there was no standing seat for the RCOC.

The EDC discussed a desire to establish a seat on the EDC for the RCOC.

Commissioner Gliksohn asked why the fiscal sponsorship with RCOC had not yet been executed given the EDC had approved it a few months ago, and Mr. de Leon advised signatures were still pending from the RCOC to sign the fiscal sponsorship.

Ms. Beacham clarified the City's contracting process was very difficult. Staff was also frustrated with the process and the delay was not all on the City or on the RCOC given that the key challenge was insurance requirements.

Commissioner Gliksohn suggested an established organization like the RCOC had established insurance, but Ms. Beacham reiterated the City's process and stated some challenges were with an insurance provider who may not conform to what the City's contract administrator required. Staff was aware the RCOC would have what the City required, the City had collaborated with the RCOC on many things, but again there was a process that must be followed and there were some challenges.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy understood TOR was now a nonprofit with the RCOC, but RCOC was also the fiscal sponsor. She asked for clarification.

Ms. Beacham clarified there was a fiscal sponsorship agreement between the City of Richmond and RCOC that was in the process of being executed. TOR was still a part of the City of Richmond.

7. Council Liaison Robinson News or Report

There was no report.

8. Public Comments/Announcements

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, reported he attended the Richmond Youth Council and encouraged the filling of vacancies on the EDC and he planned to attend the January Youth Council meeting.

Mr. Hindler also expressed concern with the capacity of the meeting room, which was too cramped, and suggested the EDC consider alternate meeting rooms at City Hall, noting other Commissions had used the Shimada Room for meetings. He asked the EDC to consider alternating venues in 2026. He invited everyone to the Santa Fe Neighborhood Council Hug-a-Bear Dinner at the Galileo Club, December 10, 2025 from 6:00 to 10:100 p.m., \$50 a person; and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce Christmas Party, December 11, 2025, at Mechanic's Bank at Hilltop with La Strada to cater. He also reported he had some items to bring to the Personnel Board related to economic development to be shared in the future and further invited everyone to the Senior Winter Ball, December 13, 2025 hosted by the Commission on Aging, \$50 per person, with Top Shelf to perform and El Sol to cater.

9. Closing Comments

Vice-Chair Thompson thanked everyone for their contributions during the meeting and throughout the year helping to make the City of Richmond become a more prosperous City and enhance economic vitality. He also wished everyone a joyful holiday season and a great New Year and looked forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy reported on the passing of City employee, Arts & Culture Manager Winifred Day, whom she had met a number of years ago and had purchased a painting from her that had been placed in one of the Kaiser rehabilitation facilities.

Ms. Beacham advised the passing of Ms. Day was unexpected. Staff had been in contact with Ms. Day's family and heard the Richmond Arts Center was planning a celebration on January 17, 2026. She asked the EDC to stay tuned for more information.

10. Adjournment: 1:00 p.m.