



**CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, October 5, 2022 6:00 pm**  
**In Person at Economic Development Facility**

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10300 Eaton Place, Small Conference Room, Fairfax, VA 22030

**Commissioners Present:**

Chair Kathleen Paley  
Vice-Chair Jeff Hermann  
Commissioner Tom Ross  
Commissioner and Secretary Beth Young  
Commissioner and Treasurer Fred Cornett

**Others Present:**

Christopher Bruno, Director, Economic Development Office  
Danette Nguyen, Deputy Director & Programs Manager, Economic Development Office  
Matthew Easley, Assistant Director for Finance and Operations, Economic Development Office  
Ashleigh Scarborough, EDA Associate, Economic Development Authority  
Nicole Merlene, Business Investment Manager, Economic Development Office  
Andrew Wilson, Project Manager  
Dawn McGruder, Non-voting Commissioner Designee

1. Call to Order Chair Paley
  - a. Chair Paley recognizes Director Bruno to do an introduction of Nicole Merlene, the Business Investment Manager for the Economic Development Office, she will be responsible for developing a lead generation framework, in the EDO, for business attraction.
  - b. Chair Paley recognized and welcomes commissioner elect, Dawn McGruder.
2. Adoption of September Meeting Minutes [**VOTE**] Commissioners
  - a. Commissioner Ross initiates motion to approve and Vice-Chair Hermann 2nds motion.
    - i. Passes unanimously.
3. Chair Comments Chair Paley
  - a. Chair Paley puts forth the idea for commissioners to have an off-site meeting to have open discussion, creative thinking about future projects, and strategies for the budget.
    - i. Director Bruno adds that it would be a good idea for the commissioners to talk about what the findings and recommendations for the strategic planning are.
  - b. Commissioners agree that it is a good idea. The commissioners agree that meeting around the begging of the new year would be best.
4. Draper's Update PM Andrew Wilson
  - a. PM Wilson states that two tasks left on final punch list, installing no parking signs and fixing a curb.
  - b. The resolve of the Fire Prevention Code Permit, should be completed this week.
  - c. Draper's has notified PM Wilson that they are doing well.
  - d. Deputy Director Nguyen adds that September and October rent were received.

## 5. NOVA Labs Update

Commissioner Ross

- a. Commissioner Ross spent time with Bradley Matthews from NOVA Labs on Friday 10/30.
  - i. In the previous meeting there was three focus areas: getting up and running, beautification, and growth.
    1. The focus and priorities are still getting up and running and beautification.
  - ii. In terms of up and running, the building plan was approved and work to be done this week. A couple electric panels need to be replaced, which is why the wood shop specifically is not open yet. Fire chief wants NOVA Labs to replace an exterior stairwell from the second floor to the first and bring roadway up to level with door. All in progress.
  - iii. In terms of beautification, they are closing walls and putting up dry walls throughout, as well as painting them. Plans are to replace the front door with a glass panel for vision in and out. A reception desk has been built at the front.
  - iv. Internship program for high school and college students is going well, some interns were able to teach summer camps and programs.
  - v. Practical skills classes are getting a positive response and sign up numbers are positive.
    1. New week day, walk in participation option.
  - vi. NOVA Labs will have two booths for Fall fest, one of which is the robotics team. The booth is setup to promote facility, and try to get people to visit with open houses the two weekends following the Fall Festival.
  - vii. Sponsorship update
    1. Seeking to get a grant from Go Virginia, Matthews also talked about working with the Fairfax chamber and the Lamb Center. NOVA Labs is seeking a \$750,000 loan.
  - viii. Membership update:
    1. Statistical growth and the current waitlist are encouraging numbers for the present and future.
    2. Commissioner Ross also discussed membership options and specific pricing.
  - ix. Commissioner Ross is satisfied with the continuous progress at his visits.
    1. Commissioner Ross invited Bradley Matthews from NOVA Labs to next months meeting.
- b. Director Bruno asks if the businesses that are leasing the offices are companies or individuals.
  - i. Commissioner Ross says he senses that they are small companies,
  - ii. Director Bruno adds that the feedback is very helpful, and that information on specific tenants would be helpful. This way the EDA/O can connect them to resources that are available.

## 6. Strategic Planning Process Update

Director Bruno

- a. Director Bruno speaks on the advisory group meeting last week, where the findings in GAP analysis were discussed. Essentially an examination of what economic development is doing vs Comprehensive Plan implementation guide calls for them to do.
- b. What is being found is that economic development has taken on a portfolio that is significantly larger than what was initially tasked. The original Comp Plan that was drafted has been exceeded by the current office and caused them to be stretched too thin. This process will help figure out where the focus should be in terms of resources and personnel.
- c. The consulting is now taking the information back to draft the strategic work plan, which is expected to be presented Tuesday of next week. The next step is scheduling advisory group work section, to discuss draft plan. The preliminary draft plan should be done by the end of next month. Lastly, that draft plan will take the comments from the advisory group and finalize the plan which will be released to the EDA and City Council.
- d. The advisory group has been reaching out to certain people for individual meetings. Part of this is because they would like to talk to key stakeholders without staff or sitting leadership in place, to figure out where it can continue to refine the alignment.
- e. Director Bruno compliments the process, for pushing economic development to look at the things they are doing and refine programs, initiatives, and priorities. He is feeling positive about some of the things that have been emphasized over the past years, while also seeing there are things that should be prioritized more.
  - i. Programs are helping business retention.
- f. Many updates to come.
- g. Commissioner Young asks when the next city council starts their terms.
  - i. Director Bruno answers January 1<sup>st</sup>, the first time it is happening then because of move to November election, mayor and city council.
- h. Vice-Chair Hermann asks: other than the stake holder group what other public process is there? Or if the public has any input. Director Bruno responds that the stakeholders' group was very thoughtfully selected by the consultant, and the city leadership team, to touch areas of the city that may have influenced the Comp Plan implementation guidelines.
- i. Vice-Chair Hermann essentially asks what happens on the council side? Director Bruno responds that essentially charged with implementing the policy adopted by the council, workplan response to the current policy that is adopted by the council. The council can consider a modification at any time. In a year or so, they will have to consider their update to the Comp Plan, which is a public process.

7. Mason Enterprise Center

PM Wilson

- a. Facility Relocation Update
  - i. Director Bruno recognizes PM Wilson's "amazing" work.

- ii. Director Bruno adds that he has received great updated about the SBDP move that happened on 10/4.
- iii. PM Wilson updates that all construction was completed and finalized at MEC.
- iv. PM Wilson states that the SBDC move went well and the only issue on that side is getting COX to finalize internet and switches, which should be done on 10/6.
- v. PM Wilson notifies that more furniture was brought from the previous MEC than expected. The instructions were given to all clients on what furniture was at the new MEC, and what the intent was. PM Wilson participated in one of Eddie Hill's fireside chats and talked about what is to be expected of tenants regarding furniture.
  - 1. MEC Staff tagged more furniture than expected because they thought it might be needed.
- vi. Director Bruno paraphrases that essentially the MEC is out of space due to furniture overload, and now it must be paid to get rid of some things.
- vii. Chair Paley asks where extra furniture is being held.
  - 1. PM Wilson answers that it is in the kitchen. It is being worked through.
- viii. The overflowed furniture was intended to be given to the MEC clients who chose to not relocate, the building owner was also interested in keeping some of the furniture, or put on govdeals.com.
- ix. Director Bruno notifies that just getting rid of furniture is not an option, and not allowed. Now that the furniture is here it is being decided whether to send it back or to hold it here while on govdeals.
  - 1. His immediate concern is that some clients who did not move to the new MEC are expecting to be able to claim some of this furniture. This was an incentive to stay, that is no longer an incentive.
- x. Chair Paley asks if it is known how much it would cost to send the furniture back, and if there is a space at WillowWood that the landlord would allow the EDA to use to hold things for a short period of time at a lower cost.
  - 1. Director Bruno states that all options are being looked at.
  - 2. PM Wilson adds that he will know exact pricing tomorrow, 10/6.
- xi. PM Wilson adds that the remaining MEC furniture will be delivered on Monday, 10/10.
- xii. Director Bruno notifies the authority that PM Wilson and himself have expressed frustration to the programs staff about how this problem arose. The process was clear. The solution is being figured out while trying to save as much money as possible.
- xiii. Commissioner Ross asks if the MEC is going to help pay for fixing the furniture problem.
  - 1. Director Bruno shares that all the authority's money is their money as well.
- xiv. Commissioner Young asks if this will affect any final inspections for the move.

1. PM Wilson does not believe that it will affect the inspection. It is scheduled for tomorrow 10/6.
  2. COX is still fixing the internet and switch issues in the MEC as well.
- xv. Commissioner Cornett asks if there is currently internet or Wi-Fi in the new MEC.
1. PM Wilson responds that as of today, 10/5, there is no Wi-Fi or internet.

b. Tenant Relocation Update

- i. Director Bruno responds to the previous point, that the MEC client's leases do not start until November 1, 2022. The access provided now is provisional, and to set up. If the services are on and working, through the interim EDA Council, drafted a license agreement that allows them to work out of that space, but the EDA does not have a obligation to have a space prepared for them until Nov. 1.
- ii. Director Bruno adds that the previous space's lease has been terminated.
- iii. Commissioner Young asks if anyone has paid for October month's rent.
- iv. Director Bruno adds that he does not believe so, there is a rental break.
- v. Director Bruno adds that the MEC Program staff has started signing new leases, and the process will be that the Interim EDA Council will review them for accuracy and correctness, then it will be brought to Director Bruno or Chair Paley for signature. The first round will be completed tonight.
- vi. Director Bruno notifies the authority that Crystal Crammer, has been hired as a temp part-time employee as the Interim EDA Council, to oversee some legal needs in the EDA.
- vii. Commissioner Ross asks what the occupancy will be for the MEC on day one.
  1. Director Bruno says that the MEC staff notified him it was 65%. He can communicate a more accurate number after he meets with the staff again.

8. EDA/O Update

a. Ribbon Cutting for EDO

- i. Deputy Director Nguyen states that there are a few dates being chosen from, and the EDO ribbon cutting should be in the next coming weeks. An invitation will be sent out to commissioners.

b. Programs Update

Deputy Director Nguyen

i. Business Openings/Ribbon Cuttings

1. Five new businesses are opening around the city, including restaurants, health and wellness, and retail businesses. Deputy Director Nguyen adds that it would be gratefully appreciated if the commissioners would attend these events.

ii. Fairfax City Summer Restaurant Week

1. A report will be coming out mid to end of November, 30-day lead time, in terms of meals tax, end of October to send it to us.
2. Preliminary information: A diner survey was done for the first time this year;

- i. 228 valid responses were completed
    - ii. 79% stated that Fairfax City restaurant week encouraged them to dine out
    - iii. 76% ordered off the restaurant week menu
    - iv. 56% traveled from outside the city to dine in
    - v. 43% stated that they participated in other economic activities such as shopping, after dining at a Fairfax City restaurant
  3. Deputy Director expressed her excitement in these metrics and is eager to provide them in the economic impact report that will be seen in November.
  4. Deputy Director gives thanks to Jennifer and the Chamber for their feedback. Now, a survey will be sent out to the specific restaurants for their feedback. So far, the response has been positive and impactful for restaurants.
  5. Jennifer B. Rose, Executive Director Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, talks about how it is challenging to get companies or individuals to compete surveys, so they provided an incentive for all restaurants that complete the survey will be put in a drawing for their next year restaurant week registration fee to be covered.
  6. Deputy Director is pleased with the metrics from the restaurant week.
  7. Commissioner Ross adds that Artie's made a list in the Washington Post of top 40 restaurants.
- c. Other
  - i. Deputy Director Nguyen communicates that the Fairfax Flex close loop gift card will be launching at the Fall Festival.
    1. 14 businesses are currently signed on to participate. Diverse businesses have signed up.
    2. Part of the Fall festival promotion will be raffling off \$5000 worth of Fairfax Flex Cards.
  - ii. Lastly, there will be an email to volunteer on Small Business Saturday, outreach to the business community has begun and 20 businesses are already registering to participate.
    1. It will be back to what was done in the past, not participating in all activities from previous year.
    2. There is excitement to partner with the Chamber and the OTFBA. More information coming within the coming weeks.
    3. This will take place on November 26.
  - iii. Commissioner Young asks about George Mason University's homecoming.

1. Deputy Director Nguyen notifies that her first kick off meeting with GMU Athletics and Student Involvement next week, more to be communicated at a later time.
  2. Commissioner Young corrects that she meant to ask about GMU Parent's Weekend.
  3. Deputy Director Nguyen states that we do not do anything with that event. There are bus tours that we provide our Find it in Fairfax City Guides to.
- iv. Commissioner Cornett asks how the EDO's Canada trip went.
1. Director Bruno adds that a number of the staff traveled to Vancouver to the International Downtown Association. It is a conference that we support and are interested in. This was very economic development focused, so it was worth it.
    - i. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year of attendance.
  2. Deputy Director Nguyen adds that there were resources in regard to pop up programs that they have done and how they have incorporated creative economies into their business districts, and engaged with the public as well.
  3. Director Bruno shares some practical information is being brought back for the administration of some of the ARPA Programs in terms of the pop-up of vacancy reduction programs.

#### 9. Public Comment Public

- a. William Pitchford from City of Fairfax Citizens for Smarter Growth, comments that the Smart Growth group would like to recognize the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters, for an excellent "Meet the Candidate" meeting.
- b. Pitchford adds that the Flatts are a success story for the City. He got a chance to speak to some students about it and all positive feedback. They are in the process of adding a tanning salon.
  - i. There is a concern in lack of street lighting from the Flatts to downtown. From Democracy to North Street, there are no street lights except for residual lighting from other stores or business.
- c. On the Strategic Plan, Pitchford asks what is the chance of the public having access to the GAAP analysis.
  - i. Director Bruno states that he has to share it with the public, and will be on contact to coordinate that.
- d. Jennifer B. Rose, Executive Director Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, adds that the "Meet the Candidate" meeting was successful and had a great turn out.

- i. Adds update on producing for the first time in 15 years, a community guide and business directory for members. In conjunction with 65-year anniversary.
- ii. Young Professionals network is organizing a drive for Fairfax's Finest (first responders and law enforcement), on October 28<sup>th</sup> they will be collecting in-kind donations to give to the police and fire stations.
- iii. Next week will be annual membership luncheon where electing board of directors, Tuesday at American Legion.
- iv. Lastly concerns were shared that most recent reiteration of the Camp-Washington small area plan from some people on Fairfax Blvd. over some land being taken for paths, etc.

10. Adjourn

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**\*\*\*Next Meeting: Wednesday November 9 2022\*\*\***  
**THIS WILL BE AN IN-PERSON MEETING**  
**10300 Eaton Place, Small Conference Room, Fairfax, VA 22030**