

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
In-Person Meeting
Wednesday, January 14, 2026 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Richmond Room, 1st Floor, 450 Civic Center Plaza
Richmond, California

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to order: 11:33 a.m. by Chair Thompson.

2. Roll Call & Check In

Present: Chair Thompson, Vice-Chair Diana Wear and Commissioners Gliksohn, Sewell-Murphy*, Robinson, Willis and Council Liaison Doria Robinson*
*Arrived after Roll Call

Absent: Commissioners Jackson and Lynch

Staff Present: Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer and Junne Garcia, Management Analyst; and James Atencio, Senior Assistant City Attorney

3. Approval of Minutes

a. December 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

4. Chair's Report

Chair Thompson reported the meeting agenda was full with a large portion of the agenda to be spent on the development of a Mission Statement and goals for the Economic Development Commission (EDC). When appointed to the EDC, he had researched the EDC meeting minutes and the City website to understand the priorities of the EDC and how it did its business. The EDC did not currently have a Mission Statement or supporting goals, but a job description, as reflected in the City ordinance.

A Mission Statement and goals of the EDC would enable the EDC to provide adequate advice and advocacy to the City of Richmond's economic development priorities that were more relevant, timelier and more actionable. The EDC needed to make wise economic decisions on economic development since it was the City's economic advisor. He was of the opinion that the City was heading towards more difficult economic times given the current period of "stag-flation," where prices remained high, wages remained stuck and growth remained slow and small. The federal government's policies on tariffs, immigration and taxation would continue inflationary trends, and changes in federal funding priorities, particularly in renewable and sustainable energy, which would undercut potential job creating opportunities.

Chair Thompson noted the EDC would continue to partner with the elected City Council, City Manager, City staff and citizens to enhance the economic vitality of the City and to promote prosperity of its citizens.

That was the purpose of good government and was what the City of Richmond did to promote the general welfare of all of its people. Goals that supported the EDC mission that enabled the City's economic vision was essential to that purpose. He advised over the next couple of months the EDC would establish a Mission Statement and goals to support that mission.

Chair Thompson added the annual Form 700, was good government and would have to be submitted by Commissioners by April 1, 2026. He emphasized the importance of Commissioners to be free of conflict of interest and the appearance of conflict of interest.

5. Old and/or New Business

a. Presentation – Conflict of Interest from City Attorney

Jesson de Leon, Senior Business Assistance Officer, provided a PowerPoint presentation on Conflicts of Interest for Boards and Commissions, which included an overview of what was a conflict of interest; key prohibitions; disclosure requirements and consequences and best practices.

Responding to questions from the EDC on the presentation, Messiers de Leon and Senior Assistant City Attorney James Atencio clarified the restriction that one could not hold more than two public offices at one time; the rule that one could not serve on more than one City Commission at one time, which was not a conflict of interest but a City rule; clarified there were specific definitions contained in the Government Code or in the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) regulations that governed conflicts of interest related to the definition of "immediate family;" if a Commissioner had a conflict of interest that Commissioner had to leave the room when discussing the item in conflict; the City Clerk's Office had records of the mandatory ethics training; and disclosures were reviewed by the FPPC and were open to the public.

If a Commissioner had any questions as to whether there was a conflict of interest they were asked to contact staff so the concern could be forwarded to the City Attorney's Office for a determination as to whether or not that was the case.

b. Discussion – Creation of EDC Mission Statement and Goals

Chair Thompson reported that Vice-Chair Wear had prepared information on the development of Mission Statements and goals, with three strong draft Mission Statements prepared for consideration. The information had been included in the EDC packet.

Vice-Chair Wear explained she had come up with the framework and the Chair provided feedback. The EDC had a Mission Statement that was online, and which read: *The purpose of this Commission is to recommend long-term economic development goals to the City Council and the City's officials as it concerns the overall economic development of the City.*

Vice-Chair Wear wanted to recognize the gifts and talents that the EDC brought to the table and with respect to the goals, deliverables and measures of accountability that meant each Commissioner would step up to do the work at the behest of the Mayor's Office, which involved more than just showing up for a meeting. She wanted to improve the Commission's reputation to be an active, fully conscious, participating Commission with strategic goals and deliverables.

Council Liaison Robinson asked whether the process of changing the Mission Statement involved the City Council and suspected it did, although Vice-Chair Wear described the discussion for a “working” Mission Statement.

Council Liaison Robinson pointed out that Commissioners changed. She emphasized the need to craft something that was durable and that would be able to recognize the skill sets of the various Commissioners serving on the EDC over time without being too specific to avoid the need to constantly change the Mission Statement, which was why the goals and objectives were so important. She wanted it to be clear that the City Council may need to review and vote on the establishment of a new Mission Statement, and emphasized the need to be transparent about the process whatever it may be.

Vice-Chair Wear explained that this effort would come from a Pilot Project she had discussed with the Mayor and his Chief of Staff, who supported her moving forward.

Council Liaison Robinson again cautioned the Vice-Chair and clarified that the Mayor was only one member of the City Council with one vote and the appropriate process would have to be followed. While any goals established would be the goals of the EDC, a Mission Statement may require approval from the City Council since the EDC was an advisory body to the City Council.

Chair Thompson asked whether the existing Mission Statement posted on the City website was the official Mission Statement and asked how it had been established.

Mr. de Leon understood the Mission Statement on the City website was part of the Richmond Municipal Code (RMC).

Mr. Atencio clarified that in order to revise the Mission Statement, it would require City Council approval for an actual amendment to the ordinance.

Vice-Chair Wear asked if the same applied to a “working” Mission Statement.

Commissioner Gliksohn suggested the EDC could proceed with how to accomplish the very broad existing Mission Statement, but with more specifics, yet to be discussed.

Council Liaison Robinson reiterated her concern with any changes to the official Mission Statement posted on the City website and her understanding there was a process for making a change.

Commissioner Willis commented some meetings started with a type of affirmation and that could be considered for the EDC but the Mission Statement on the City website would remain until officially amended.

Vice-Chair Wear suggested they could discuss EDC 2026 Working Goals for the EDC to use to harness the gifts and talents of the EDC’s current membership, with the “working” Mission Statement to offer a framework to set those goals.

Chair Thompson suggested the use of the term “purpose” in the original Mission Statement was equal to “mission.” He recognized if the EDC wanted to change the original Mission Statement, as posted on the City website, a formal ordinance amendment process would be required to make that happen. As such, he suggested the EDC had more liberty in establishing goals to meet that purpose.

Commissioner Glikshon suggested perhaps officially changing the Mission Statement could be considered at the end of the year of the Pilot Project to see how the EDC worked with it to achieve its goals and whether the goals had been accomplished, after which the Mission Statement could be reevaluated.

Vice-Chair Wear highlighted an outline she had provided to the EDC at this time. She acknowledged the City Council had already identified six strategic goals, and recommended working within those City Council established goals. Subsequently, the EDC could discuss how it did its work, including the work of the standing committees. She sought specific goals, the completion of those goals, and some way to measure those efforts.

At this time, three draft Mission Statements were read into the record for consideration.

- 1) *The EDC serves to enhance the economic development vitality of Richmond and promote the prosperity of its citizens. In partnership with the City Council and City executive leadership, the EDC focuses its efforts on sustainable economic development, on upgrading high road job opportunities for our residents. The EDC meets the mission with advice and guidance to the City on economic matters that is timely, data driven, substantive and advances Richmond's strategic vision.*
- 2) *The EDC envisions Richmond as a bustling City that serves residents, businesses, developers and artists. Richmond welcomes visitors from around the Bay Area with its transportation hubs and miles of shoreline. This Commission aligns with the City's 2024 Strategic Goals and works in concert with the City's executive leadership. This Commission has the goal of enhancing economic development throughout the City, benefitting and enriching small businesses, providing support for downtown development and improving the quality of life for working people, residents and visitors to our City. The Richmond Economic Development Commission is open for business.*
- 3) *The EDC is an economic gateway entering its work in the City's 2024 Strategic Goals. They fulfill their work through Standing Committee assignments and in partnership with the City's executive leadership and City Council. The EDC supports and promotes small businesses, downtown development and enhanced sustainability practices. They collaborate with the Port of Richmond, foster progress and development. The EDC envisions Richmond as a bustling City that serves residents and welcomes visitors to our festivals, concerts, art and recreation areas.*

The EDC and members of the audience discussed the three draft Mission Statements and there was consensus for the second draft Mission Statement, with it to also include statements about job opportunities, the Port of Richmond, sustainability, clarification that the EDC was an advisory body led by volunteers and residents of Richmond, the voice of the community and that the EDC was the economic gateway to the City's 2024 Strategic Goals, along with some other wordsmithing edits that were offered including a recommendation to eliminate the sentence that read: *Richmond welcomes visitors from around the Bay Area with its transportation hubs and miles of shoreline* from Draft 2.

Mr. de Leon clarified, when asked, that the Business Times feature of Richmond was currently being drafted and would be brought to the EDC in the near future for discussion.

Vice-Chair Wear asked the EDC to now discuss goals and deliverables at this time. She advised a draft would be prepared for the working Mission Statement to be presented at the next EDC meeting.

In response to Council Liaison Robinson, Vice-Chair Wear clarified the recommendations from the EDC had been presented to the City Council mostly related to the Taste of Richmond (TOR) and the Green, Blue New Deal (GBND).

Council Liaison Robinson suggested both long and short-term goals be provided to the City Council on an annual basis.

Chair Thompson commented he had always thought it would be useful for the EDC to provide a report card on the current state of economic development in the City of Richmond. Possibly they could discuss a framework of what that report card would cover, grading scheme and communication plan.

Commissioner Willis liked the idea although he recognized it would be a big undertaking.

Vice-Chair Wear asked if that had to be a Consent Calendar item for the City Council.

Council Liaison Robinson suggested a Study Session would allow a report card or recommendations from the EDC to be presented. If a Consent Calendar item, there may not be much engagement.

Possible goals were offered by the EDC along with input from members of the audience, as follows:

- Mission Statement with the input from the EDC into a new version to be provided prior to the next meeting of the EDC;
- Consider Ambassadors;
- Recognition of upcoming EDC sponsored events, Taste of Richmond (TOR) and the Sustainability Expo and work to ensure these were successful events and make everyone aware prior to the events;
- On the ground communication with businesses that would be helpful to the EDC;
- Highlight small businesses in some way;
- Measures of accountability on deliverables;
- Consideration of a non-binding contract as a motivator to stipulate what EDC Commissioners planned to do, to be signed and dated, and to help people stay on track;
- Recruit more members to the EDC;

- Consider helping the City with fundraising and with the EDC as a sounding board and support for grant proposals. (Staff reported staff was working on a potential Catalyst Grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD)); and
- Consider different fundraising opportunities for the downtown development, given the absence of redevelopment, and understand what may be available to help support the kind of development the City would like to see as opposed to what developers wanted to offer.

Everyone was thanked for their input.

6. **Subcommittee Reports**

a. Sustainability – Lead: Sewell-Murphy

Mr. de Leon clarified an email Commissioner Sewell-Murphy sent had gone only to the Sustainability Subcommittee members and not to the full EDC, although copies were provided at this time.

Vice-Chair Wear asked whether a fiscal sponsor had been identified for the Sustainability Expo.

Commissioner Willis understood there was a sustainability goal for the City of Richmond on the City website. He appreciated the summary Commissioner Sewell-Murphy provided, which was a good start but also recognized the date of April 18, 2026 for the Sustainability Expo was not that far away and it would take a lot of effort to get there. He found what was lacking in the outreach was sponsorship, was uncertain \$10,000 was enough to cover the event, and there was a need for investors to pitch in and a marketing person. He also reported that the Policy & GBND Subcommittee was all-in to support the Sustainability Subcommittee and the Sustainability Expo, which was a huge opportunity, but to get it right would take a lot of work in the next few months.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy commented, when asked, she had not included the budget information for the event but it had been shared in the past.

Commissioner Gliksohn reiterated a fiscal sponsor remained to be identified.

Mr. de Leon reported in terms of the potential fiscal sponsor, Marin Clean Energy (MCE) had not responded to staff inquiries, that a follow-up email had been sent on January 8, 2026, and a reminder email would be sent on January 15, 2026. He reported that Commissioner Willis had recommended staff reach out to Richmond Main Street Initiative (RMSI).

Commissioner Willis reported that in speaking with the Executive Director of RMSI, it would be tough for RMSI to serve as the fiscal sponsor for the Sustainability Expo given the timing of the event.

Mr. de Leon commented that Commissioner Sewell-Murphy had provided another list to reach out to as well.

Commissioner Gliksohn liked the presentation provided by Commissioner Sewell-Murphy, which expressed what was important about the Sustainability Expo, honoring the past and the future. He emphasized the importance of the ties to Richmond's illustrious past.

Chair Thompson also thanked Commissioner Sewell-Murphy for the summary information but he too was concerned about the date of the event and finding a fiscal sponsor.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy understood based on what she had read that since the City had an Economic Development Department a fiscal sponsor was not needed.

Mr. de Leon explained that issue had been addressed earlier. Staff had reached out to the City Attorney's Office and had learned it was not within the powers of the EDC to have a bank account.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy stated she was not talking about a trust account but her understanding since the City of Richmond had an Economic Development Department, and since the EDC was tied to the Department, the City Council and the Department were technically the fiscal administrators for the EDC and a fiscal sponsor was not needed.

Council Liaison Robinson suggested the Sustainability Expo needed an invitation for people to come and help make it happen and start having regular meetings to move the project forward. There were a number of different nonprofits or corporations who may love to be part of the vision, and the issue of a fiscal sponsorship could be discussed as part of that first meeting, or it may be possible if anyone had any money to throw in for such an event, or have people help prepare a budget. She suggested the creation of a flyer to invite people to be part of a planning committee for the event to potentially get more support to make it happen. It may also be possible as part of the creation of a committee to create that invitation list for the types of businesses, nonprofits and others to make it happen and then set up a regular meeting schedule to work through the steps.

Council Liaison Robinson stated there were a number of people who had experience in putting on major events that could bring that experience to the table and maybe help to solve some of the problems being experienced.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy suggested they had to clarify the relationship between the EDC and the Economic Development Department.

Commissioner Willis liked Council Liaison Robinson's recommendation. He recognized the City had provided \$10,000 for the event. He pointed out if a marketing person was considered and a contract was required, the City would have to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP), which Mr. de Leon confirmed.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy asked whether the event planner for TOR had gone through an RFP process, to which Mr. de Leon clarified the event planner for TOR did not have to go through the RFP process since that work was done by the fiscal sponsor for the event.

Commissioner Glikshon pointed out that was the beauty of a fiscal sponsor; they handled that step quicker than the City of Richmond.

Vice-Chair Wear suggested that work should not be directed to City staff who had limited time to do that work, and the message had been clear over the years that the EDC could not come up with projects and then ask staff to pull it off, which was not an option.

Commissioner Sewell-Murphy verified that the fiscal sponsor wrote the checks for the event.

Commissioner Willis reiterated RMSI had been approached as the possible fiscal sponsor although that would not be feasible.

Council Liaison Robinson understood a large Earth Day event had been planned on the same date proposed for the Sustainability Expo. Knowing the date of that event was important and should be taken into consideration. She could text the person coordinating Earth Day to learn of the exact date planned for the event.

There was acknowledgement the EDC had previously discussed the fact that the Sustainability Expo should not be scheduled on the same date as Earth Day, and not compete with other events.

Chair Thompson suggested he and Commissioners Sewell-Murphy and Willis get together and put some energy into Council Liaison's Robinson's idea and hopefully secure a potential fiscal sponsor.

Council Liaison Robinson expressed the willingness to host an initial planning committee meeting. She could get a room and send out invitations to get the ball rolling and not wait until the next EDC meeting given the tight timeline.

Commissioner Glikshon was not confident the event would make the April 2026 deadline, and while it would be nice to tie into Earth Day, they had to be realistic with the planning process. Possibly a date in September should be considered to allow more time to make it happen.

Council Liaison Robinson advised against that and suggested moving forward even if it was a small event for the first time since there could be improvements in the future. She recognized the event had been pushed out multiple times before and it would never be easy to meet the deadlines. With the help of staff, she could send out available dates, and they could then coordinate a date for a planning committee meeting and possibly staff could help to secure a meeting room. Her email address was available online and she asked people to send her names of organizations, people and businesses who may be interested in participating in a planning committee meeting to then be able to create an invitation list.

It was suggested AC Transit and PG&E be included on the invitation list.

Commissioner Robinson expressed the willingness to join the committee members.

- b. Cannabis – Lead: Lynch

There was no report.

- c. Policy & GBND – Lead: Willis

Commissioner Willis reported on fundraising collaborations with the subcommittee making itself available for that, and they were all in for the Sustainability Expo.

Vice-Chair Wear expressed the willingness to serve as a liaison from the Downtown Development Group.

It was recommended the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Grant people be included on the invitation list.

Council Liaison Robinson suggested it would be great to have a table for people to sign up and learn about the services to be provided.

d. Taste of Richmond – Lead: Pending

Mr. de Leon reported standing meetings for TOR were being held every Thursday at 1:30 p.m. online with an invitation to be extended to the TOR Subcommittee when information on dates and location would be discussed.

Vice-Chair Wear asked whether the Cannabis Subcommittee would be eliminated since there was no one on the subcommittee and there had been no report for some time.

Chair Thompson recommended the Cannabis Subcommittee Report remain on the agenda for the next meeting to allow the current state of the subcommittee to be discussed, what could be done as a Commission for the cannabis program, the status of the work Commissioner Lynch had done, and then determine whether another subcommittee was or was not needed. He recognized Commissioner Lynch had not attended EDC meetings for most of 2025 and it may be possible the subcommittee needed to be resurrected. He also recognized the excellent work done by Commissioner Lynch for the Cannabis Subcommittee.

7. Council Liaison Robinson News or Report

Council Liaison Robinson provided a status report on the establishment of the Macdonald Avenue Task Force, with the Task Force having invited applicants to join the Task Force resulting in a few applications currently under consideration in the Mayor's Office. The Task Force was looking for business owners, land owners, residents and stakeholders around Macdonald Avenue. She highlighted the current members of the Task Force with the purpose to consider both a short- and long-term vision for projects to improve Macdonald Avenue. There was currently a focus on the Macdonald Avenue and 12th Street property, to be discussed at the next Task Force meeting with a presentation from a group that provided potential development tracks for the property, identifying what was viable in the current economy and market, with suggestions on other approaches to development.

The Task Force met every second and fourth Tuesday at 11:00 a.m., with meetings open to the public and with the Task Force to run to the end of the year. Reports out were planned in June with a community meeting process around the recommendations after the report out and with a final report in December. A consultant would be hired to help with the economic plan research and ensure recommendations were viable.

Council Liaison Robinson explained that people wanted a lively downtown that was anchored in Richmond's history, arts and culture. She added an RFP would be finalized at the next meeting of the Task Force for the consultant and there was a desire to use internal consultants for a quicker process. Additionally, a couple of tours had been held with local elected officials and if anyone wanted to participate in any upcoming tours they should contact her or the Executive Director of RMSI.

Commissioner Gliksohn asked staff to advise the EDC of any upcoming tours.

Council Liaison Robinson reported information on the Task Force was available on the City website.

1st - Gliksohn, 2nd – Wear, to extend the meeting to include Public Comment, approved by a Roll Call vote.

8. Public Comments/Announcements

Cordell Hindler, Richmond, offered the following comments: He planned to attend the next Youth Council meeting to encourage the filling of vacancies on the EDC; invited everyone to the New Year's Mega Mixer at La Strada Restaurant on January 26, 2026 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. free to hosting Chamber members, \$10 for non-members when registered and \$15 at the door for members and non-members not registered; Contra Costa Mayors Conference, February 5, 2026, hosted by the City of Richmond in the Richmond Auditorium or Richmond Country Club, R.S.V.P. required, \$70 per person; and the Richmond Community Foundation Annual Gala, February 7, 2026, Berkeley Country Club, 5:30 to 10:00 p.m., \$250 per person including champagne and appetizers. He added that he had presented items to the Personnel Board but could not reveal them as yet other than to advise they were related to economic development.

9. Closing Comments

Vice-Chair Thompson thanked everyone for their contribution and participation, particularly during the discussion of the Mission Statement and goals, with the comments on the Mission Statement to be consolidated and forwarded to the EDC prior to the next meeting. Chair Thompson asked the EDC to consider additional goals that could be considered at the next meeting.

10. Adjournment: 1:02 p.m.