



**CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**May 1, 2024 6:00 pm**  
**In Person at Economic Development Facility**

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10300 Eaton Place, Conference Room B, Fairfax VA 22030

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**Commissioners Present:**

Chair Beth Young  
Vice Chair Kathleen Paley  
Treasurer Dawn McGruder  
Secretary Tom Ross  
Commissioner Patrick Soleymani- Remote  
Commissioner Mitchell Cho  
Commissioner Jeffery Hermann

**Others Present:**

Chris Bruno, President and CEO, Economic Development Office  
Nicole Toulouse, Senior Assistant Director, Economic Development Office  
Matthew Easley, Assistant Director, Economic Development Office  
Tara Borwey, Programs Manager, Economic Development Office  
Andrew Wilson, Special Projects Manager, Economic Development Office

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1. Call to Order *Commissioners*
    - a. Meeting called to order at 6:01 pm.
  2. Motion to Consider Remote Participation
    - a. Secretary Ross motions.
    - b. Passes 6:7
      - i. Commissioner Soleymani abstains.
  3. Adoption of May Meeting Agenda *Commissioners*
    - a. Secretary Ross motions.
    - b. Vice Chair Paley seconds.
    - c. Passes unanimously.
  4. Mason Enterprise Center – Fairfax (15 Mins w/ Q&A) *Center Director Hill*
    - a. The current occupancy rate remains at 50% as of April. Efforts to increase occupancy are challenging at the moment.
      - i. What specific challenges are hindering the increase in occupancy? Are there any targeted strategies in place to address these challenges?
        1. The current challenges in increasing occupancy are primarily related to external factors such as economic. To address these challenges, the team is focusing on networking and outreach efforts to attract new tenants and foster collaborations.
    - b. John Sankovich has joined the team as a new mentor.
      - i. How will John's expertise benefit the startups within the program? Are there any specific areas where his guidance will be particularly valuable?
        1. He brings extensive experience in the technology industry, particularly in guiding startups to successful exits. His expertise fills a crucial gap in the mentorship team.

- c. Highlights a successful visit from an Italian delegation and ongoing discussions with representatives from the Kyrgyz Prime Minister's office. Prospects for future collaborations are promising, including the upcoming arrival of a Soft Landings company from the NGI EU program.
    - i. What are the potential implications of these collaborations for the participating startups?
      - 1. Collaborations with international open doors for startups to explore new markets, access resources, and establish strategic partnerships.
  - d. Upcoming Initiatives and Events:
    - i. Discusses establishment of a podcast and video studio is in progress, with equipment purchased and volunteers engaged.
      - 1. How will the podcast and video studio contribute to the ecosystem's growth and visibility? What criteria are being considered in selecting partners for future events and collaborations?
        - a. The studio will serve as a valuable resource for startups to create engaging content, showcase their innovations, and attract potential investors and customers.
  - e. Efforts are underway to formalize the startup process for businesses and enhance engagement with mentors and corporate partners. Recent collaborations with government agencies and federal initiatives have provided valuable opportunities for revenue generation and business growth.
    - i. How will the formalization of the intake process enhance support for startups? What additional educational programs or resources are being explored to support business growth and development?
      - 1. Offerings such as patent and trademark classes aim to equip startups with essential knowledge and skills to protect their intellectual property and navigate legal aspects of business operations.
5. Business Investment Italy Update *Director Bruno on behalf of BI Specialist Marie Spittel*
- a. Mentions collaboration between the business investment team and the MEC to secure Widely as a tenant.
  - b. Shares details regarding recent meetings and ongoing discussions with the Italian Trade Agency to establish a soft-landing space at the Mason Enterprise Center. Details of the proposed soft-landing program included hosting ten Italian companies in Fairfax City, providing access to the US market, accommodation in local hotels, and office space at the MEC.
  - c. Recent progress was made in conversations with the Small Business Development Center and a regional president in Italy, leading to the development of parallel programs for soft landing.
  - d. Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy, where the program participants reside, was described as autonomous, making collaboration easier.
  - e. Emphasized the importance of coordination between the business investment team and the Mason Enterprise Center (MEC) team.
6. EDA Budget Update *Assistant Director Easley*
- a. Discusses the budget, highlighting that there are just under 60 days left in the fiscal year.
  - b. Finance staff are collaborating with the city and budget team to monitor class balances and anticipate needed transfers back into the city, particularly for part-time and temporary staffing needs.
  - c. A profit and loss statement up until April 23rd was shared, emphasizing the successful rollover of previous fiscal year funds into the new fiscal year.

- d. All funds are committed to economic development purposes and do not revert to the city's General Fund, with the Economic Opportunity Fund serving as a source for large-scale incentives.
  - e. Legal fees related to Drapers are expected to continue into the next fiscal year.
7. Programs Update *Programs Manager Borwey*
- a. Women's Entrepreneur Empowerment Luncheon
    - i. Expressed excitement about reviving this event, which was held before the pandemic and provides an update on current preparation.
    - ii. This event is scheduled to return on September 25, 2024, from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the Sherwood Center. Save-the-date notifications have been sent out to inform the community.
    - iii. Efforts are underway to secure a women-owned business to cater the event.
    - iv. Planning for panels, speakers, and creating an Eventbrite page for ticket sales is in progress.
    - v. A new grant opportunity, aligned with the luncheon, is being proposed for women-owned businesses in Fairfax City. Proposal includes a \$25,000 investment for five grants to women-owned businesses.
    - vi. Aims to acknowledge grant recipients at the luncheon if awarded before the event.
  - b. Retail Week.
    - i. The initiative aims to connect residents with the city's diverse retail offerings, evaluate its success, and potentially expand in future years. The event will feature themed shopping days, storytelling, and media exposure to promote retailers in Fairfax City.
    - ii. "Retail Week" will be renamed during the Fairfax City Economic Development rebrand.
    - iii. A planning committee will be formed, including local retailers and interested commissioners. Fifth and Main have been contracted to develop and execute the event.
    - iv. The projected date for the event July 2024, typically a slow time for retailers, to boost awareness and sales.
    - v. \$15,000 has been allocated for the pilot project, with no additional funding requested at this time.
  - c. Culinary Career Collaborative
    - i. This initiative aims to provide resources and training for individuals seeking culinary skills and employment within Fairfax City and the Town of Vienna. This will be a collaboration with The Town of Vienna Economic Development Division (ToVEDD) and Fairfax City Economic Development.
    - ii. The program application has been created using Qualtrics to ensure a polished and user-friendly process. Efforts are made to collect data for future program metrics, such as preferred language of participants.
    - iii. A consultant has been hired to develop a landing page, with the website expected to launch soon. Advertising and recruiting efforts will begin to attract both students and restaurant partners.
    - iv. The program consists of three different tracks, each offering a four-day, six-hour-per-day class. The Nutrition Kitchen at GMU has been secured for the following dates:
      - 1. Advanced Track: June 20-21 and June 25-26
      - 2. Beverage Track: July 11-12 and July 15-16
      - 3. Beginner Track: July 18-19 and July 22-23.
8. Public Relations and Marketing Update *PR & Marketing Manager Jones*

- a. iHeart Media Radio & Magazine Print Ads
    - i. The PR and Marketing team collaborated with Professional Sports Publications (PSP) for a print ad featured in the Washington Nationals Magazine Gaming Program, available at Nationals Park during every home game.
    - ii. FCED advertised in Virginia Business magazine's The Big Book: Economic Development Issue, positioning Fairfax City as an ideal location for businesses of all sizes.
    - iii. A 6-month FCED radio ad campaign was launched in partnership with iHeart Media, airing on DC101 multiple times a week. Each month, a new 60-second ad will feature Executive Director Chris Bruno discussing the benefits of starting or expanding a business in Fairfax City.
  - b. FCED Rebrand
    - i. As part of the strategic plan, a new website will launch at [gofairfaxcity.com](http://gofairfaxcity.com), featuring refreshed branding with a vibrant green and blue color scheme and a new logo. Social media channels will be rebranded from @fairfaxcityeda to @gofairfaxcity. This change will be communicated via social media, the website, e-newsletters, and emails to all City partners. Launch date TBD.
  - c. Marketing & Communications Strategy Update
    - i. The FCED marketing and communications strategy is being developed by the staff in collaboration with Commissioners Tom Ross and Mitchel Cho. This comprehensive strategy will be presented at the next EDA meeting.
9. New Business *Commissioners*
- a. Director Bruno-
    - i. Acknowledges interns for amazing work throughout the year.
    - ii. The lease agreement for the current space includes provisions for a sign on the exterior side of the building. The team is now advancing the process to install this sign, which will prominently feature a version of the new logo on the top right-hand side of the building. Andrew Wilson, the special project manager, is leading this initiative and coordinating with Matt.
    - iii. Tara, Britney, and the speaker will be attending the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) conference in Las Vegas in a few weeks. This conference represents a valuable opportunity to establish connections with potential retail tenants and developers.
    - iv. Proposes to reconvene a sub-committee to discuss progress in leasing and marketing the MEC. The team is focusing more on marketing the Mason Enterprise Center (MEC), including an upcoming radio advertisement on DC 101 that will highlight the MEC.
  - b. Mitchell Cho-
    - i. City Scene Newsletter
      - 1. Inquired about the frequency and coordination of the content for the newsletter. It was noted that the EDA's work has not been prominently featured in the newsletter recently.
10. Public Comment (5 mins) *Public*
- a. City Manager- Laszlo Palko
    - i. Introduces himself and highlights the significance of economic development as a top priority for the city's growth.
  - b. Smarter Growth- Bill Pitchford
    - i. Attention has recently been focused on the Ox Fairfax blockade, a performing arts center and hotel development downtown. This project promises significant economic benefits for the city.

- ii. Discusses recent visit to Staunton, Virginia, revealed a similar successful venue, the Blackfriars Theater and Hotel 24 Cell, which attracts many visitors. Those who haven't been are encouraged to visit.
      - iii. Encourages EDO to contact Stanton's Economic Development Officer for insights on their development process, which could aid the city's own project transition.
    - c. Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce- Jennifer Rose
      - i. Expresses gratitude to Economic Development department for supporting the Economic Summit breakfast.
      - ii. Shares updates regarding the upcoming community guide and membership directory, featuring a section on the retail renaissance in Old Town Fairfax.
      - iii. Announces new events manager that will be starting soon.
    - d. OTFBA- Tess Rollins
      - i. Welcomes the new City Manager on behalf of the city.
      - ii. Shares current preparations for the Asian Festival, including layout adjustments and street closures.
      - iii. A marketing agency was hired to promote the upcoming festival and update their website.
      - iv. Staff training opportunities will begin in June, demonstrating a commitment to ongoing improvement.
    - e. Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce- Doug Church
      - i. Emphasizes the importance of keeping such opportunities open to the public, express gratitude to the organizers, and specifically commends Chris for his excellent work.
11. Adoption of April Meeting Minutes [VOTE] *Commissioners*
- a. Motioned by Secretary Ross.
  - b. Seconded by Commissioner Hermann.
  - c. Passes unanimously.
12. Adjourn *Chair Young*
- a. Motioned by Secretary Ross.
  - b. Seconded by Commissioner Hermann.
  - c. Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm.

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**\*\*\*Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 5 \*\*\***

**6pm, 10300 Eaton Place Small Conference Room Fairfax, Virginia 22030**

**Subject to Change. Please Check [fairfaxcityconnected.com](http://fairfaxcityconnected.com) for more information.**