CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING AGENDA
Wednesday November 5, 2025 6:00pm
In Person at Economic Development Offices

10306 Eaton Place, Training Room 115 AB, Fairfax, VA 22030

Commissioners Present:

Chair Jeff Hermann
Vice-Chair Patrick Soleymani
Treasurer Dawn McGruder
Commissioner Kathleen Paley
Commissioner Kristin Feenstra
Commissioner Michelle Nguyen

Others Present:

Brooke Hardin, Interim Director, Economic Development Department
Matthew Easley, Interim CEO/Assistant Director of Operations and Finance, Economic Development Department
Marie Spittell, Senior Assistant Director for Business Investment
Brittany Jones, PR & Marketing Manager, Economic Development Department
Stephanie Gerson, Tourism Specialist, Economic Development Department
Monika Blakely, Programs Associate, Economic Development Department
Liz Keller, Business Investment Specialist, Economic Development Department
Jordan Locke, Economic Development Associate, Economic Development Department

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1. Call to Order — Chair Hermann
    a. Chair Hermann called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.
2. Adoption of the November Meeting Agenda **[VOTE]** — Commissioners
    a. Vice-Chair Soleymani Motions
    b. Chair Hermann Seconds
    c. Motion Passes Unanimously
3. Adoption of the October Meeting Minutes **[VOTE]** — Commissioners
    a. Vice-Chair Soleymani Motions
    b. Chair Hermann Seconds
    c. Motion Passes Unanimously
4. FY25 Audit Presentation — Cherry Bekaert
    a. Audit delivered an unmodified (clean) opinion, the highest assurance level.
    b. No material weaknesses, no significant deficiencies, and no corrected or uncorrected misstatements.
    c. Financial statements were found to be free from material misstatement.
    d. Required Yellow Book and Auditor of Public Accounts reviews were completed.
    e. One instance of noncompliance related to the Statement of Economic Interests filing deadline (filed after February 1). No impact on financial statements.

f. Key Points:
    i. Internal controls were reviewed and found to be functioning appropriately.
    ii. GASB 101 and 102 implemented with no material impact to EDA.
    iii. Upcoming GASB 103 and 104 are also expected to have no material effect.
    iv. No disagreements with management; no fraud or illegal acts detected.
    v. Independence requirements met; no prohibited non-attest services provided.
g. Commissioners expressed appreciation for the clean audit and staff's work.
h. Chair thanked the staff and the auditor for their diligence.

5. Exploring Office-to-Residential and Mixed-Use Redevelopment Presentation Municipal Insights, LLC
    a. Purpose: To evaluate office inventory, market conditions, and feasibility of future adaptive reuse or redevelopment, including potential office-to-residential conversion.
    b. Key Data Points:
        i. 85 standalone office buildings in Fairfax City totaling ~3M sq ft.
        ii. Only 22% Class A; majority Class B/C.
        iii. Average building age: over 50 years.
        iv. Persistent underinvestment: ~$9 per sq ft average over ten years (half industry avg).
        v. Current office vacancy: 13%, well below regional average (~20%).
        vi. Lease rates remain below regional averages (20–50% lower).
    c. Major Findings:
        i. Fairfax City offices are older, affordable, and often well-occupied.
        ii. Conversion interest surged due to the Gatewood Plaza proposal; however, market data and policy context show limited near-term viability.
        iii. Need for clear policy direction from the City on conversion strategy.
        iv. Conversion opportunities likely limited to designated activity centers (Northfax, Old Town).
        v. Strong potential alignment with Fairfax County EDA's target industries (AI, aerospace, quantum, biotechnology, next-gen data centers).
    d. Recommendations:
        i. Adopt a clear City policy on office conversions.
        ii. Prioritize reinvestment in Class A and strong Class B buildings.
        iii. Limit conversion consideration to activity centers.
        iv. Explore incentives and pilot projects (including housing trust fund feasibility analysis).
        v. Strengthen collaboration with Fairfax County EDA.
        vi. Develop a decision-making tool or structured criteria for evaluating proposals.
    e. Commissioners discussed potential Council work sessions and emphasized the need for proactive guidance.

6. Mason Enterprise Center Fairfax Update Center Director Hill
    a. The MEC team reported strong performance trends.
    b. Occupancy:
        i. Jump from 77% to 81%, and tracking toward 85% for November.
        ii. Tour activity increasing demand; existing tenants expanding within MEC.
        iii. New companies joining include New Start Behavioral Health and Sweet Science.
    c. Financials:
        i. Burn rate is decreasing significantly due to increased occupancy.
        ii. Revenues are at 33% of the annual budget, while expenses are only 21%, ahead of targets.
    d. New Strategic Assets:

i. Partnership launched with GMU's MIX Makerspace
    1. Provides fabrication labs, laser processing, robotics, AR/VR environments, green screen studio, podcast facilities, prototype fabrication, and micro-credentialing.
    2. This amenity becomes a strong differentiator for tenant companies.

e. Soft-Landings & Mentorship:
    i. Increased international interest (Taiwanese manufacturer, Czech tech incubator).
    ii. Two new mentors added:
        1. Sales expert (tech sector)
        2. Healthcare administration specialist

f. Commissioners praised MEC's momentum and successful turnaround.

7. Business Investment Update — Senior Assistant Director Marie Spittell
    a. Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA)
        i. Signed with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock.
        ii. Enables joint programming, reverse pitch days, access to patents, and technology commercialization pathways.
    b. Mason Korea Market Research Partnership*
        i. Two GMU–Korea students are conducting an ecosystem analysis to strengthen the Korean pipeline leads.
    c. John Cabot University Fellowship (Italy)
        i. New marketing-focused cohort preparing data-driven strategies for Italian business recruitment.
    d. GMU College of Engineering Capstone Project
        i. Students developing IT tools for business intelligence, CRM automation, and sector-based ecosystem tracking.
    e. Pub Scholars Program Launch
        i. First session scheduled for December 2 at Ornery Brewery.
        ii. Dr. Stephen Ruth (GMU) presenting on "Artificial Intelligence: Blessing or Curse?"
    f. Commissioners expressed support for expanding academic partnerships.
8. Finance and Operations Update — Interim President and CEO / Assistant Director
    a. Council Information Sessions
        i. Four upcoming sessions in early 2026 with GMU Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship and Finance/Planning staff.
        ii. Topics will include fiscal impact analysis, development feasibility, planning frameworks, and entitlement processes.
    b. Transportation Visioning Study - Renewed effort to launch a near-term multimodal connectivity study linking Old Town to Vienna Metro via BRT or similar last-mile options.
    c. GMU Approved Caterers Workshop - Supporting workshops to help Fairfax City restaurants qualify for GMU's curated restaurant list.
    d. Mason Korea Research Engagement - Additional update confirming project underway.
    e. Patriot Ventures and Marketplace Initiative - Early-stage effort exploring a retail-market concept showcasing GMU-affiliated products.
    f. Financial Snapshot (as of October) — Treasurer Dawn McGruder
        i. EDA is 33% through the fiscal year, with 42% of funds committed/spent (front-loaded due to active programs).

ii. MEC support ($150,000) remains committed under the MOA; administrative transfer pending.
iii. Program activity is high across Flex Card, Ribbon Cutting, Marketing, and Shop Local initiatives.

9. Marketing and Communications Update — PR & Marketing Manager Jones
    a. Restaurant Week Media Performance (Record-Setting)
        i. 437M total reach
        ii. ~$4M publicity value
        iii. Coverage included Forbes, WTOP, and multiple TV and radio segments (Fox5 Lunch Hour, DC101, Hot 99.5).
    b. Advertising Campaigns
        i. New testimonial-based ads featuring MEC and Fairfax City companies.
        ii. Custom landing page created (business.gofairfax.com) for ROI tracking.
        iii. Radio campaign running on 106.7 The Fan with multiple recorded spots (Textore, Scotty Hook Golf).
        iv. Washington Business Journal placement scheduled for mid-November.
        v. DC News Now video campaign underway with on-site filming at Nova Labs and Highlight Technologies.
    c. Commissioners commended the shift to business-driven messaging.
10. Tourism Update — Tourism Specialist Gerson
    a. Visitor Center Staffing Pilot - Exploring temporary staffing solution (one day per week) with Office of Historic Resources.
    b. Old Town Wayfinding & Parking Signage Initiative
        i. Budget enhancement request submitted for FY27 through Old Town Service District Fund.
        ii. Addresses inconsistent and outdated signage contributing to perceived parking shortages.
    c. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Update
        i. City Council unanimously approved reopening the City Charter to increase TOT ceiling above current 4%.
        ii. Next steps with state-level approval required.
        iii. Goal: secure 2% increase with a dedicated tourism allocation.
    d. Tourism Branding RFP - RFP closes next week; seeking Commissioner participation in review committee.
11. Public Comment
    a. Old Town Fairfax Business Association
        i. Completion of Main Street grant program:
            1. New 18–24 month Old Town Action Plan developed through extensive stakeholder engagement
            2. Full rebrand of OTFBA, new website, and new marketing materials
            3. Over 104,000 website visits since February
            4. Installation of new Old Town pole banners scheduled for Sunday
            5. Exploring DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area) proposal for Old Town
        ii. Commissioners expressed strong support for DORA exploration.
    b. Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce
        i. Major Events Completed:
            1. Fall Festival (30,000+ attendees)

2. Civic Connections Class graduation (7-week civic education program)
3. Valor Awards honoring 49 first responders
4. Annual Meeting (membership net positive 27 for the year)

ii. Upcoming:

1. Veterans Week business recognition events
2. Continuing education and professional development tied to OTFBA–EDA grant requirements

iii. Commissioners thanked the Chamber for its leadership and partnership.

12. New Business
    a. Commissioner recognition of Jordan Locke for her final meeting as EDA associate and expressed gratitude for her two years of service.
13. Closed Session under Section 2.2-3711.A.7 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel **[Vote]**
    a. Vice-Chair Soleymani Motions
    b. Chair Hermann Seconds
    c. Motion passes Unanimously
    d. At approximately 9:45 PM, the Fairfax City EDA moved into a closed session under Section 2.2-3711.A.7 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel
    e. Chair requested moving the closed session to the end of the meeting to allow members of the public to exit.
    f. Certification adopted upon return to open session passes unanimously.
14. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned approximately at 10:15pm

*****Next Meeting: December 3, 2025*****

6 pm, 10306 Eaton Pl. Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Subject to Change. Please Check gofairfaxcity.com for more information.