



**CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING AGENDA**

**Monday, May 11, 2026 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
Secretary Mitchell Cho
Treasurer Dawn McGruder
Commissioner Kristin Feenstra
Commissioner Michelle Nguyen

Others Present:

Colleen Kardasz, Director, Economic Development Department
Marie Spittell, Senior Assistant Director for Business Investment
Matthew Easley, Assistant Director of Operations and Finance, Economic Development Department
Liz Keller, Business Investment Specialist, Economic Development Department
Meryam El Gazzah, 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 May Meeting Agenda [VOTE] | |
| Commissioners | |
| a. Secretary Cho Motions | |
| b. Chair Hermann Seconds | |
| c. Motion Passes Unanimously | |
| 3. Adoption of the April Meeting Minutes [VOTE] | |
| Commissioners | |
| a. Secretary Cho Motions | |
| b. Chair Hermann Seconds | |
| c. Motion Passes Unanimously | |
| 4. Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of Series 2026 Public Facility Revenue Bonds for City of Fairfax [VOTE] | Commissioners |
| a. Secretary Cho Motions | |
| b. Chair Hermann Seconds | |
| c. Motion Passes Unanimously | |
| d. Purpose: | |
| i. To present and consider a bond resolution authorizing the issuance of revenue obligations for public facility projects related to Phase One of the Willard-Sherwood Health and Community Center, a joint initiative between Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax. | |

e. Key Information:

- i. The proposed debt issuance totals approximately \$22 million.
- ii. City Council unanimously approved the debt issuance resolution prior to EDA consideration.
- iii. The City anticipates returning to the EDA for additional bond issuances related to future project phases.
- iv. City staff, bond counsel, financial advisors, and EDA counsel reviewed the financing documents and process.

5. Formation of Nominating Committee for FY27 EDA Officers

Commissioners

- a. Purpose: To establish a nominating committee to develop a slate of officers for Fiscal Year 2027 EDA leadership positions.
- b. The Chair noted that the annual officer rotation process requires the formation of a nominating committee.
- c. Vice Chair volunteered to serve as the nominating committee.
- d. The EDA established the nominating committee for FY27 officer nominations.

6. FDI Group Presentation

John Cabot Students

- a. Purpose: To present the results of a collaborative foreign direct investment (FDI) attraction initiative between Fairfax City, John Cabot University in Rome, and Sweet Science Marketing focused on engaging Italian companies interested in expanding into the United States.
- b. Background:
 - i. The initiative is part of an ongoing partnership established through a memorandum of understanding with John Cabot University.
 - ii. Students previously assisted with mapping the Italian business ecosystem and attended SelectUSA to support Fairfax City's FDI attraction strategy.
 - iii. Sweet Science Marketing collaborated with students on campaign development and later established operations in Fairfax City.
- c. Key Presentation Highlights:
 - i. The student team identified and targeted 77 Italian companies aligned with Fairfax City's strategic industries, including aerospace, information technology, and financial services.
 - ii. The campaign emphasized Fairfax City's business advantages, including tax and bureaucratic support, access to talent, workplace opportunities, and proximity to Washington Dc.
 - iii. A LinkedIn advertising and email outreach campaign was developed and tested using data-driven marketing methods.
 - iv. The campaign generated 38 leads, significantly exceeding the original projection of using data-driven marketing methods.
 - v. Students also presented recommendations for future outreach efforts, including enhanced landing pages, personalized engagement strategies, and culturally tailored business recruitment approaches.
- d. Discussion:
 - i. Director of Business Investment, Marie Spittel, highlighted the value of combining academic research with practical business attraction strategies.
 - ii. The collaboration was presented to the International Economic Development Council as a potential model for other communities and may be submitted for award consideration.
 - iii. Spittel, discussed upcoming meetings with representatives from the Italian Embassy to further explore opportunities for engaging innovative Italian companies.

- iv. Commissioners and attendees commended the students and partners for the successful campaign and presentation.

7. George Mason University – IT Capstone Presentation

Patriot Tech Solutions

- i. Purpose: To present the outcomes of a collaborative IT capstone project with George Mason University students focused on improving operational efficiency through AI-enabled tools and automation solutions for the Economic Development Division.
- ii. Background:
 - i. The City partnered with GMU IT capstone students to identify and address operational challenges related to business tracking, data management, and information processing.
 - ii. The student team was tasked with developing AI and automation-based solutions to improve efficiency and reduce manual workload.
- iii. Key Solutions Presented:
 - i. Development of an automated system using Microsoft Power Automate to consolidate business intelligence tracking into a single workflow.
 - ii. Creation of a recurring automated digest to provide weekly updates on priority companies and economic development information.
 - iii. Implementation of automated data collection and archiving tools for articles, company updates, and zoning-related inquiries.
 - iv. Use of AI-assisted summaries to support staff review and decision-making.
- iv. Key Outcomes:
 - i. Improved efficiency by reducing manual monitoring of company news and data sources.
 - ii. Enhanced ability to track existing and high-priority businesses in the City.
 - iii. Cost effective solution leveraging existing Microsoft 365 licensing.
 - iv. Streamlined citizen and business inquiry management through automated workflows.
- v. Discussion:
 - i. Staff noted that the solution consolidates multiple disparate information sources into a single system, improving visibility and responsiveness.
 - ii. The project was highlighted as a practical application of AI and automation in local government operations.
 - iii. Commissioners and staff expressed appreciation for the students' work and the potential time savings and efficiency gains.

8. Treasurers Report

Treasurer McGruder

- a. Purpose: To provide updates on committed and projected expenditures, fund balances, and fiscal year planning considerations.
- b. Key Discussion Points:
 - i. Staff clarified the distinction between legally “committed” funds (contracted obligations) and planned or intended expenditures that have not yet been contracted.
 - ii. Departments were asked to submit updated projections of anticipated spending to improve year-end forecasting and identify potential unspent balances.
 - iii. Staff noted that certain funding items remain under review, including prior-year obligations and timing of payments.
 - iv. Additional clarity was provided regarding specific line items, including tourism-related website funding and other programmatic expenditures.
- c. Next Steps:

- i. Staff will return in June with updated projections for FY27 rollover amounts and remaining balances.
- ii. Departments will continue refining expected expenditures to support budget planning and fiscal transparency.

9. TOT Tax Discussion

Commissioners

a. Purpose:

- i. To discuss updates related to the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), including recent budget decisions, calculation methodology, and anticipated economic impacts.

b. Key Discussion Points:

- i. Staff clarified that TOT rates in many jurisdictions include a mandatory 3% allocation to the Northern Virginia Transportation District, which contributed to confusion in published figures during the budget process.
- ii. The final adopted TOT rate was set at approximately 10.5%, following earlier proposals that were higher.
- iii. Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact of the increased TOT rate on local hotels, tourism demand, and business competitiveness relative to neighboring jurisdictions.
- iv. Discussion highlighted the importance of tourism marketing support and the role of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in driving hotel demand.

c. Economic Impacts and Concerns:

- i. Commissioner Feenstra noted that combined tax burdens (local, state, and transportation-related taxes) may negatively affect hotel margins and competitiveness.
- ii. Potential risks were identified for lower-margin hotels, including reduced profitability and possible operational challenges.
- iii. Continued discussion is planned regarding long-term tourism strategy and regional partnerships.

d. Next Steps:

- i. Staff will conduct outreach to local hotels and tourism stakeholders to assess impacts of the tax changes.
- ii. The City will evaluate potential mitigation strategies, including enhanced tourism marketing support and possible funding mechanisms.
- iii. Signed with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock.
- iv. Enables joint programming, reverse pitch days, access to patents, and technology commercialization pathways.

10. GMU Center for Regional Analysis Fairfax City Industry Study [VOTE]

Commissioners

a. Secretary Cho Motions

b. Chair Hermann Seconds

c. Motion Passes Unanimously

d. Purpose: To develop a targeted business investment and attraction strategy for Fairfax City based on industry clusters, market trends, and local assets.

e. Staff discussed the proposed partnership with George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis to conduct an industry cluster and SWOT analysis study for Fairfax City.

f. The study will evaluate local economic assets, market activity, and emerging opportunities to identify industries best aligned with Fairfax City's competitive advantages.

- g. Commissioners emphasized the importance of focusing business attraction efforts on industries and companies that are a realistic fit for Fairfax City, rather than pursuing large-scale projects such as HQ2-type developments.
- h. The study is intended to guide future outbound business attraction efforts, investment strategies, and allocation of EDA resources.
- i. Key Discussion points:
 - i. The study will focus on industry clusters rather than single industries, identifying groups of businesses with shared operational needs and market synergies.
 - ii. Commissioners discussed the need to better understand how Fairfax City's existing office inventory, particularly Class B office space, may align with target industries such as cybersecurity, financial services, and related technology sectors.
 - iii. Staff noted that the study may help identify future areas for deeper analysis, including strategies for modernizing or repositioning existing office properties.
 - iv. GMU representatives highlighted potential opportunities to connect the EDA with university-affiliated financial services and business networks for additional industry insight.
- j. Timeline and Funding:
 - i. The initial phase of the study is expected to be completed in Fall 2026.
 - ii. The project is funded through the EDA's existing partnership allocation with GMU, with additional funds reserved for possible future deep-dive analysis if needed.

11. New Business

- a. No comments

12. Public Comment

- a. A member of the public encouraged the EDA and staff to continue leveraging the expertise and resources available through George Mason University as part of the City's industry attraction strategy.
- b. The speaker recommended further refining the City's approach to financial services recruitment by identifying specific segments within the industry, such as community banks, wealth management firms, and larger financial institutions, to better determine where Fairfax City may have competitive advantages compared to surrounding jurisdictions.
- c. The speaker noted that Fairfax City's existing office inventory and business environment may appeal differently depending on the type and scale of financial institution being targeted.
- d. The speaker thanked the Commissioners and staff for their work and acknowledged the City's ongoing financial constraints while expressing support for continued collaboration and participation where possible.
- e. Public comment was closed following the remarks.

13. Closed Session under Section 2.2-3711.A.5 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel

[Vote]

- a. Secretary Cho motions
- b. Chair Hermann Seconds
- c. Motion passes Unanimously
- d. At approximately 7:10 PM, the Fairfax City EDA moved into a closed session under Section 2.2-3711.A.5 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel
- e. Certification adopted upon return to open session passes unanimously.

14. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned approximately at 7:45 pm

*****Next Meeting: June 3, 2026*****

6 pm, 10306 Eaton Pl. Fairfax, Virginia 22030

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