



CITY OF FAIRFAX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 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
Treasurer Dawn McGruder
Commissioner Kristin Feenstra
Commissioner Michelle Nguyen
Commissioner Kathleen Paley

Others Present:

Colleen Kardasz, Director, Economic Development Department
Matthew Easley, Assistant Director of Operations and Finance, Economic Development Department
Meryam El Gazzah, Economic Development Associate, Economic Development Department

-
1. Call to Order Chair Hermann
 - a. Chair Hermann called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.
 2. Adoption of Remote Participation for Commissioner Paley [VOTE]
 - a. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - b. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - c. Motion Passes Unanimously
 3. Adoption of the June Meeting Agenda [VOTE]
Commissioners
 - a. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - b. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - c. Motion Passes Unanimously
 4. Adoption of the May Meeting Minutes [VOTE]
Commissioners
 - a. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - b. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - c. Motion Passes Unanimously
 5. Fairfax City Tourism Brand Presentation Friendly Design Co.
 - a. Purpose: To present the proposed visitor-facing tourism brand for Fairfax City and review the associated branding, marketing, and placemaking strategy developed by the City's consulting team.
 - b. Background:
 - i. Fairfax City retained a consulting team consisting of Friendly Design and Walnut Street Creative to develop a tourism and destination brand.
 - ii. The project included market research, stakeholder engagement, focus groups, surveys, and analysis of comparable tourism destinations and regional competitors.

- iii. The initiative was intended to establish a cohesive, consumer-facing identity to support tourism promotion, placemaking efforts, and visitor attraction.

c. Key Presentation highlights:

- i. The consulting team introduced the proposed tourism brand, "Explore Fairfax City," designed to serve as the City's primary visitor-facing identity.
- ii. The branding incorporates a ribbon-inspired logo intended to convey movement, exploration, and connectivity while maintaining visual consistency with existing City branding elements.
- iii. The consultants emphasized that the brand is intended to function as both a place brand and a tourism brand, supporting marketing, wayfinding, placemaking, events, and visitor engagement.
- iv. Sample applications were presented, including social media graphics, event marketing materials, street banners, wayfinding signage, maps, promotional merchandise, and advertising concepts.
- v. The presentation outlined opportunities to expand the brand through themed messaging such as "Taste Fairfax City," "Shop Fairfax City," "Play Fairfax City," and "Learn Fairfax City."
- vi. The consultants discussed a phased implementation strategy and identified performance metrics to measure brand awareness, visitor engagement, and tourism-related outcomes over time.

d. Discussion:

- i. Commissioners discussed the importance of creating a distinct tourism identity while maintaining consistency with existing City branding.
- ii. Questions were raised regarding differentiation from regional tourism organizations and whether additional tagline or destination-positioning elements should be incorporated into the brand.
- iii. Commissioners emphasized the importance of establishing measurable performance indicators and evaluating the effectiveness of the brand through visitor engagement and awareness metrics.
- iv. Discussion also focused on coordination between the tourism brand and other City initiatives, including wayfinding, placemaking, marketing campaigns, and future website development.
- v. Friendly Design Co. noted that additional implementation materials, marketing strategies, and budget considerations will be presented as part of future discussions.

6. Mason Consulting Group Presentation

Mason Consulting Group

a. Purpose:

- i. To provide an overview of the partnership between Fairfax City Economic Development and Mason Consulting Group (MCG) and present the outcomes of student-led consulting projects completed for Fairfax City businesses during the Spring 2026 semester.

b. Background:

- i. The partnership between Fairfax City Economic Development and MCG was launched in 2025 to support Fairfax City businesses through student consulting engagements while providing students with hands-on professional experience.
- ii. During the Spring 2026 semester, MCG received more than 30 business applications and selected three Fairfax City businesses for consulting projects. Twenty-one student consultants were selected from a pool of 65 applicants.

c. Key Presentation Highlights:

- i. MCG representatives outlined the organization's structure, educational programming, and project management process, which includes client discovery meetings, site visits, business check-ins, and final project deliverables.
 - ii. Student teams completed consulting projects for three Fairfax City businesses: Omni Wellness Studio, DP Adaptive Fitness, and Nova Labs.
 - iii. For Omni Wellness Studio, students conducted financial and marketing analyses, developed new membership package recommendations, and created a social media strategy focused on increasing engagement and partnerships with George Mason University student-athletes.
 - iv. For DP Adaptive Fitness, students developed website redesign recommendations, conducted competitive benchmarking and SWOT analyses, and proposed community outreach and partnership opportunities to support business growth.
 - v. For Nova Labs, students analyzed membership retention trends, conducted competitive and SWOT analyses, developed event engagement recommendations, and proposed a tiered pricing structure for a new ceramics program.
 - vi. MCG highlighted the educational value of the program, noting that students gained practical consulting experience, applied classroom knowledge to real-world challenges, and leveraged the experience to secure internships and professional opportunities.
- d. Discussion:
- i. MCG representatives noted that client feedback and performance metrics are being collected to better quantify program outcomes and measure business impact.
 - ii. Staff expressed appreciation for the partnership and highlighted the value provided to both Fairfax City businesses and participating students.
 - iii. Staff announced plans to continue the program with additional Fairfax City businesses and to expand future consulting opportunities to include an international business affiliated with George Mason University's Korea campus that is exploring expansion into the United States.
 - iv. Commissioners commended the students for their work and expressed support for continuing the partnership.

7. Election of FY27 EDA Officers

Commissioners

- a. Purpose: To elect officers for the Fairfax City Economic Development Authority for Fiscal Year 2027.
- b. Background:
 - i. The Nominating Committee presented its recommended slate of officers for consideration by the Authority.
 - ii. The proposed officer terms were to become effective July 1, 2026.
- c. Key Actions:
 - i. The Nominating Committee nominated the following officers for Fiscal Year 2027:
 - ii. Chair: Patrick Soleymani
 - iii. Vice Chair: Kristin Feenstra
 - iv. Secretary: Michelle Nguyen
- d. Adoption of the FY27 EDA Officers **[VOTE]**

Commissioners

 - i. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - ii. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - iii. Motion Passes Unanimously
- e. The Authority voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 slate of officers
- f. Commissioners congratulated the newly elected officers following the vote.

8. Film Pilot Policy Consideration and Adoption

Director Kardasz

- a. Purpose: To consider and authorize a pilot film permit process for filming activities conducted on City-owned property and to provide staff with direction for developing a formal film permit policy.
- b. Background:
 - i. Fairfax City currently does not have a formal film permit policy governing filming activities on City-owned property.
 - ii. Staff reported receiving periodic requests from filmmakers seeking to use City facilities and parks for filming purposes.
 - iii. The proposed pilot process was developed using film permit policies from neighboring jurisdictions and other municipalities with established film programs, including Fairfax County, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland.
 - iv. Staff presented the pilot policy in response to a pending request from an independent filmmaker seeking to film on City property.
- c. Key Presentation Highlights:
 - i. The proposed permit process would apply only to filming activities conducted on City-owned property and would not regulate filming on private property.
 - ii. The policy includes insurance requirements, permit application procedures, staffing reimbursement provisions, and protections against damage to City property.
 - iii. Staff noted that while the City cannot regulate film content, applicants would be required to disclose the nature of the production, and the City may restrict the use of identifying City features for productions involving sensitive or controversial content.
 - iv. The proposed process would establish a mechanism for recovering City staffing costs associated with filming activities and could create a new revenue source through permit fees.
 - v. Staff indicated that the pilot would provide an opportunity to evaluate operational impacts and identify any necessary policy revisions before adopting a permanent process.
- d. Discussion:
 - i. Commissioners discussed insurance requirements, including minimum coverage levels and the timing of insurance verification prior to filming activities.
 - ii. Discussion focused on public notification requirements, including the potential use of signage to inform park visitors and residents when filming is occurring on City property.
 - iii. Commissioners discussed staffing, enforcement, and public safety considerations, including the potential involvement of Parks and Recreation staff and law enforcement personnel when appropriate.
 - iv. Questions were raised regarding filming outside normal park operating hours and the potential impacts on public access to City facilities.
 - v. Commissioners agreed that the pilot process would provide valuable information for refining a permanent policy.
- e. Consideration and Adoption of Film Pilot Policy **[VOTE]**

Commissioners

 - i. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - ii. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - iii. Motion Passes Unanimously

9. Consideration and adoption of an update to the EDA Procurement Policy

Director Kardasz & Assistant Director Easley

- i. Purpose: To consider and adopt updates to the Economic Development Authority's procurement policy to improve transparency, align purchasing procedures with City policies

and Virginia procurement requirements, and establish approval thresholds for purchases exceeding existing limits.

ii. Background:

- i. The Authority's existing procurement policy delegated purchasing authority to the President and CEO for expenditures up to \$50,000 but did not establish procedures for expenditures exceeding that amount.
- ii. Staff identified a need to formalize procurement procedures for larger purchases and better align EDA practices with City procurement policies and applicable provisions of the Virginia Code.
- iii. The proposed revisions were intended to provide additional transparency while maintaining operational flexibility.

iii. Key Highlights:

- i. The proposed policy maintains the President and CEO's authority to approve purchases up to and including \$50,000 with a written quote or proposal.
- ii. For purchases between \$50,000 and \$100,000, expenditures would remain within the President and CEO's delegated authority but would require inclusion in the approved annual budget or presentation to the Authority for review.
- iii. Purchases between \$100,000 and \$200,000 would require solicitation of proposals from multiple vendors and discussion through a public process.
- iv. Purchases exceeding \$200,000 would be subject to formal procurement procedures consistent with state requirements.
- v. Staff noted that the revisions primarily formalize practices already being followed and provide clearer guidance for future procurements.

iv. Discussion:

- i. Commissioners discussed the importance of documenting procurement procedures for expenditures above \$50,000 to ensure consistency and transparency.
- ii. Questions were raised regarding procurement requirements for professional services and the relationship between EDA policies and Virginia procurement regulations.
- iii. Commissioners discussed examples of existing agreements and expenditures that could fall within the proposed thresholds and how future procurements would be handled under the revised policy.
- iv. Staff emphasized that significant expenditures would continue to be presented publicly through the budget process or separate Authority actions as appropriate.

v. Consideration and adoption of an update to the EDA Procurement [VOTE]

Commissioners

- i. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
- ii. Chair Hermann Seconds
- iii. Motion Passes Unanimously

10. Travel Policy Discussion

Director Kardasz

- a. Purpose: To discuss the development of a revised travel policy that better aligns with the Economic Development Authority's business development activities while maintaining appropriate City oversight and employee protections.
- b. Background:

- i. Staff noted that existing City travel policies were developed primarily for employees who travel infrequently and may not adequately address the needs of economic development and business attraction activities.
- ii. The current policy's lodging reimbursement limits, based on General Services Administration (GSA) rates, can make it difficult for staff to stay at conference hotels or in locations where business development activities are concentrated.
- iii. Staff identified a need to clarify how City and EDA funding sources can be used for travel-related expenses while ensuring employees remain covered under applicable City insurance and travel authorization requirements.

c. Key Discussion Highlights:

- i. Staff outlined a potential framework that would maintain City approval of travel activities while allowing certain travel-related expenses to be funded through EDA resources.
- ii. Under the concept discussed, conference registration fees and per diem expenses could continue to be funded through City travel budgets, while lodging, transportation, and other business development travel expenses could be funded by the EDA.
- iii. Staff emphasized the importance of maintaining City approval processes to ensure employee coverage and risk management protections while traveling on official business.
- iv. Discussion included the increasing importance of travel as part of Fairfax City's business attraction and economic development strategy, including participation in domestic and international conferences, trade missions, and business recruitment activities.

d. Discussion:

- i. Commissioners discussed challenges associated with applying standard GSA lodging rates to business development travel, particularly in major metropolitan areas and conference destinations.
- ii. Discussion focused on balancing fiscal responsibility with employee safety, operational effectiveness, and the need for staff to participate fully in conferences and business development events.
- iii. Commissioners discussed potential approaches used by other organizations, including reimbursement caps, supplemental funding arrangements, and approved travel booking systems.
- iv. Staff noted that additional analysis is underway regarding budget impacts, administrative procedures, and coordination with City finance staff.
- v. Staff reported that the City Manager and Chief Financial Officer had expressed support for exploring a revised policy framework.

e. Next steps:

- i. Staff will continue working with City staff to develop a formal travel policy and funding structure for future consideration by the Authority.
- ii. A proposed policy will be presented at a future meeting for review and potential adoption.

11. Consideration of the FY27 EDA Budget
Director Easley

Director Kardasz & Assistant

- a. Purpose: To review the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Economic Development Authority budget and discuss funding priorities, operational expenditures, and strategic initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year.
- b. Background:
 - i. Staff presented a revised budget format designed to provide greater transparency regarding revenue sources, funding allocations, and available operating funds.
 - ii. The budget includes both EDA-controlled funds and City-held funds that support EDA operations and programming.
 - iii. Staff noted that the proposed budget reflects ongoing efforts to manage resources efficiently while adapting to reduced funding levels and evolving program needs.
- b. Key Highlights:
 - i. Staff presented a detailed overview of available revenue sources, cash reserves, and funding allocations across EDA programs and operations.
 - ii. The budget includes a proposed Agency of Record marketing model that would consolidate marketing, graphic design, social media, website support, videography, and tourism implementation services under a single contract.
 - iii. Staff explained that the new marketing approach is intended to improve continuity, reduce project-based procurement costs, and provide ongoing support across multiple program areas.
 - iv. New budget categories include division-level business development funds, professional development funding, research and analysis resources, and onboarding materials for newly elected City Council members.
 - v. The Business Investment budget includes funding to support domestic and international business recruitment travel and participation in economic development conferences and trade missions.
 - vi. Staff highlighted the continued use of grant funding and partnerships to support tourism initiatives and other strategic priorities.
- c. Discussion:
 - i. Commissioners discussed the revised budget format and expressed appreciation for the increased transparency regarding funding sources and expenditures.
 - ii. Discussion focused on future opportunities to provide year-over-year budget comparisons, financial forecasting, and additional reporting tools to support long-term planning.
 - iii. Commissioners discussed the proposed Agency of Record model and its potential to improve efficiency and responsiveness for marketing and communications activities.
 - iv. Staff noted ongoing efforts to strengthen financial reporting processes and provide more comprehensive budget documentation in future years.
 - v. Discussion also included updates regarding the Mason Enterprise Center agreement and related financial considerations.
- d. Next Steps:
 - i. Staff will incorporate commissioner feedback and prepare the proposed FY27 budget for formal consideration and adoption at a future meeting.
 - ii. The proposed budget is scheduled for approval prior to the start of fiscal year 2027 on July 1, 2026.

12. New Business

Commissioners

- i. Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Policy Discussion

- i. Commissioner Michelle Nguyen raised the topic of Fairfax City Council's upcoming consideration of accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations and discussed the potential economic development implications of expanding housing options within the City.
 - ii. Commissioners discussed the potential benefits of ADUs, including increasing housing availability, supporting workforce housing, and providing options for multigenerational households.
 - iii. Commissioners discussed authorizing commissioner Nugyen to speak before City Council and preparing a written statement or letter outlining the Authority's position.
- b. Motion to authorize Commissioner Nugyen to address City Council on behalf of the Authority in support of ADUs [**VOTE**]Commissioners
 - i. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
 - ii. Chair Hermann Seconds
 - iii. Motion passes unanimously

13. Public Comment

- a. Background:
 - i. Director of OFTBA provided an update on the recent Asian Festival, noting that the event was successfully completed and considered a strong success overall.
 - ii. The director highlighted positive coordination with the City of Fairfax, particularly the support provided by public safety personnel, including police and fire services, which ensured a safe environment for attendees.
 - iii. The director noted the planning process improved collaboration with the City and helped clarify expectations around event operations and use of city services during large-scale events.
 - iv. The director emphasized the importance of city services and continued coordination to support event safety and operations.
- b. Key highlights:
 - i. The speaker reported favorable outcomes in sponsorships, vendor participation, and overall sales, indicating a positive financial result for the event.
 - ii. The speaker noted that vendors generate a significant portion of revenue and that overall performance this year was strong.
 - iii. A follow-up survey will be conducted with participating businesses and vendors to assess their experience, identify challenges, and develop strategies to improve future participation and performance.
 - iv. The speaker noted that some businesses were uncertain how to fully participate in the event and suggested additional support and guidance moving forward.
 - v. The speaker emphasized the importance of engaging and educating new members about the purpose and significance of the Asian Festival, particularly given increased new membership this year.
 - vi. The speaker discussed opportunities to better integrate OTCA membership into event planning and participation efforts.
 - vii. The speaker provided updates on ongoing efforts to strengthen the Town and Gown relationship with George Mason University, including two recent meetings of the newly formed committee.

- viii. The speaker emphasized the importance of maintaining continuity within the committee to ensure long-term progress, regardless of staff turnover.
- ix. The speaker announced upcoming initiatives, including the George Mason Coaches Caravan event scheduled for June 27 in Old Town Fairfax, featuring university coaches and community engagement opportunities.
- x. The speaker also discussed the planned “Mason to Main Street” initiative, designed to introduce new students to Old Town Fairfax through orientation-style engagement with local businesses.
- xi. The speaker noted that the initiative will include collaboration with businesses, events programming, and experiential activities such as sampling and wayfinding.
- xii. The speaker described a potential collaboration with George Mason Athletics to host an NIL-focused activation in Old Town Fairfax, providing student-athletes with exposure to local businesses and marketing experience opportunities.
- xiii. The speaker referenced prior successful activations, including photography and influencer-style promotional events involving local businesses and students.

c. Public comment was closed following the remarks.

14. Closed Session under Section 2.2-3711.A.5 of the Code of Virginia **[Vote]**

- a. Vice Chair Soleymani Motions
- b. Chair Hermann Seconds
- c. Motion passes unanimously
- d. At approximately 7:50 PM, the Fairfax City EDA moved into a closed session under Section 2.2-3711.A.5 of the Code of Virginia
- e. Certification adopted upon return to open session passes unanimously.

15. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned approximately at 8:10 pm

*****Next Meeting: July 1, 2026*****

6 pm, 10306 Eaton Pl. Fairfax, Virginia 22030

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