



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

August 14, 2024, at 3:00 PM

[www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab)

Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Michael Stara, Chair	P	13	1
Enrique Bargioni, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Jay Adams	P	6	1
William Feinberg	P	13	1
Russ Klenet	A	5	3
Mark Giarratano	P	5	2
Nicolas Kollias	P	4	2
Marianna S. DeJager	A	4	1
Latasha Gorman	P	3	0

**Staff**

- Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)
- Melissa Mata, Management Fellow (Present)
- Amber Cabrera, Senior Assistant to the City Manager (Present)
- Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager (Not Present)
- Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)

**COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION**

Motion made by Member Bill Feinberg and seconded by Enrique Bargioni, to communicate to the Commission the following recommendation:

The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) recommends that the City Commission utilize and include both the EDAB and IFTA in discussions with developers regarding the new reimagined City Hall. An additional recommendation includes considering the inclusion of amenities that provide employee benefit and serve a public purpose (flexible community meeting amenities), similar to that proposed by the IFTA. Finally, the EDAB recommends building the new City Hall at the current location to maximize continuity and for cost-effectiveness. Overall, the EDAB Board will immediately develop a programming plan that incorporates workspace strategy and space planning focused on both public and governmental usage and over purpose.

**I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum**

Chair Micheal Stara called the meeting to order at 3:10PM. Rollcall was called, and it was noted that there was a quorum present.

Quorum was established at 3:11pm.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

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Chair Stara carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, July 10. Motion moved by Member Bargioni and Member Kollias. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:11pm.

**III. Discussion on Communications to the Commission - Reimagining City Hall**

In the meeting in July, the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Board presented the findings of the Reimagined City Hall. The board discussed and drafted a communication to the City Commission regarding a collaboration between the EDAB and IFTA when meeting with developers working on the Reimagined City Hall project. In this meeting the Board revised the drafted communication for final approval. During the discussion, the importance of outlining the board's recommendations and considerations for the project was emphasized. The communication's focus was on programming space planning. This involves strategizing on the allocation of workspace and determining the optimal number of rooms and personnel required to meet the city's needs efficiently. The Board changed the wording and proceeded to finalize the communication. At 3:23 PM, with Bill Feinberg now present, the Chair introduced a motion to approve the wording of the communication as drafted. Bill made the first motion, and Enrique seconded it. The Communication presented to the City Commission will state the following:

*“The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) recommends that the City Commission utilize and include both the EDAB and IFTA in discussions with developers regarding the new reimagined City Hall. An additional recommendation includes considering the inclusion of amenities that provide employee benefit and serve a public purpose (flexible community meeting amenities), similar to that proposed by the IFTA. Finally, the EDAB recommends building the new City Hall at the current location to maximize continuity and for cost-effectiveness. Overall, the EDAB Board will immediately develop a programming plan that incorporates workspace strategy and space planning focused on both public and governmental usage and over purpose.”*

The motion was unanimously approved, and it was decided that the communication would be forwarded to the Clerk's Office by the EDAB liaison's Von Howard and Melissa Mata. The Clerk's Office would then submit the communication for discussion at the upcoming City Commission meeting scheduled for September 3rd.

**IV. Areas of Concentration**

Chair Stara continued to the next item regarding areas of concentration. Member Feinberg raised concerns about the increasing difficulty for restaurants to remain open due to stringent city regulations, prompting a discussion on how the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) could support these businesses. City Staff, Von Howard, shared insights from his brother's experience as a restaurant owner, while Member Adams highlighted the lengthy process involved in opening new establishments. Member Giarratano pointed out that the city's preference for

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chain restaurants, driven by their established success elsewhere, might be detrimental to smaller, independent restaurants. Members also expressed concerns about how high-rise developments in downtown areas are reducing walkability and parking availability, thereby impacting the city's livability. The conversation then expanded to the broader topic of small business assistance, where Liaison, Von Howard, announced Public Affairs efforts to support small businesses through future and past town halls and the StartUp FTL program. Amber Cabrera, Senior Assistant to the City Manager, initiated the discussion around the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) programs of revealing potential shifts in how these programs are managed. Ms. Cabrera explained that certain areas, like Las Olas, are excluded from CRA assistance due to historical tax allocation decisions. Member Feinberg proposed the creation of a new funding program specifically aimed at small businesses, and Member Giarratano advocated for increased funding in the arts, linking it to the city's recent passage of an art funding bill. The dialogue underscored the need for a more supportive and flexible approach from the city to foster the growth and sustainability of both small businesses and cultural initiatives.

**V. Division Reports**

The meeting continued to the last item on the Agenda, Division Reports. Ms. Cabrera provided an update on a current project of the city regarding commercial incentives. The project is to examine the current offerings and identifying areas for improvement to better attract both small and large businesses. Chair Stara proposed implementing a rent subsidy program to assist businesses, particularly during their early stages. Member Feinberg emphasized the necessity for the city to act as a proactive partner to new businesses, advocating for not only offering incentives but also promoting and advertising these businesses, providing relief measures such as more lenient parking meter enforcement, and creating a supportive business environment. Member Giarratano highlighted the phasing out of the Qualified Target Industry (QTI) incentive and stressed the need for new incentives to retain young talent in the workforce, which is vital for economic growth. The discussion also addressed challenges in navigating the city's permitting process, with Member Adams noting that while the CRA has been effective in certain areas like Sistrunk, it has overly favored developers at the expense of small businesses.

Member Giarratano suggested revisiting the city's approach to support small businesses, focusing on operations, financial management, and revenue generation. Member Adams called for expedited permit processes to help businesses start up more quickly, and there was general agreement on extending support to rent and property assistance programs. The idea of establishing a formal small business advocate was considered, with Chair Stara suggesting converting current business assistance coordinators into formal advocacy roles. Member Feinberg pointed out that while the city offers workshops to aid businesses, there is a need to simplify processes, particularly permit renewals, to reduce bureaucratic burdens. Member Bargioni recalled his initial EDAB meeting where he raised concerns about the lengthy property development process compared to cities like Orlando. Member Feinberg supported this by



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suggesting improvements to the building department to make it more business friendly. Member Adams proposed differentiating between smaller and larger business projects to tailor processes accordingly, and Member Gorman suggested creating a team to streamline the permit process, envisioning a "one-stop shop" model to facilitate business operations.

#### VI. Member Discussion

Chair Stara opened discussion for members to discuss any additional items not on the agenda. Chair Stara additionally asked the members if they had any suggestions for next meeting's speakers. Member Bargioni proposed inviting the head of the Department of Transportation to a future meeting to address the issue of traffic light synchronization, highlighting that most traffic lights are under county control and thus represent a county-wide concern. He suggested Ben as a potential speaker to focus specifically on city streetlights. Meanwhile, Member Kollias recommended bringing in a police officer, such as Major Scelfo, to discuss homelessness laws and overall city security. Additionally, Chair Stara proposed a speaker to provide insights into the safety and security of the downtown area, with a particular emphasis on the Himmarshee district.

The Board decided that the September meeting will feature a presentation on the safety and security of downtown, the October meeting will focus on the synchronization of traffic lights, and a discussion on homelessness laws will be scheduled for a meeting following the November election.

#### VII. Meeting adjourned at 4:22 PM.

**The next EDAB meeting will be September 11, 2024, at DSD Building.**

*Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.*