



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

February 12, 2025, at 3:00 PM

www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab

Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Enrique Bargioni, Chair	P	5	1
Russ Klenet, Vice Chair	P	9	3
Jay Adams	P	10	1
William Feinberg	A	16	2
Nicolas Kollias	P	8	2
Marianna S. DeJager	P	8	1
Latasha Gorman	A	3	2
Allyson Meyers	P	2	0

Staff

Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)
 Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager (Not Present)
 Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)
 Melissa Mata, Management Fellow (Present)

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair, Enrique Bargioni called the meeting to order at 3:15 PM. Roll call was issued, and it was noted that quorum was established.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, January 08, 2025. Motion moved by Member Kollias and seconded by Member Klenet. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:16 PM.

III. Guest Speakers, City of Fort Lauderdale Development Services Department

The agenda began by City Liaison, Melissa Mata, introducing the guest speakers for the meeting. The City of Fort Lauderdale Development Services Department (DSD) attended as guest speakers at the request of the Board members from the January 08 meeting. Attending as guest speakers were, Christopher Ramirez, Chrsitopher Sparacino, Andre Cross, and Mike Maloney. The meeting was requested with the intention for EADB Members to learn about the streamline process of opening a business, business tax requirements, zoning considerations, and change of use permit. Chair Bargioni requested that Member DeJager initiate the discussion by asking representatives from DSD to clarify the process for startup businesses, specifically how they can apply for guidance and whether DSD could implement a formal guidance process.

DSD responded by explaining the business process which begins with applying for a business tax review, then working with zoning to understand if the desired business location meets zoning compliance. Once location has been approved to move forward with permit of use, the business

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owner must then apply for a permit for occupancy-for-use or a change-of-use which involves the modifications of a building to conform with the current codes of occupancy classification from the City. DSD follows city codes and guides the business owner through every step of the process to ensure efficiency and accuracy. Chair Bargioni asked the members if change-of-occupancy occurs constantly, DSD agreed and mentioned the most common challenge for a business owner to complete the business process is due to the change-of-occupancy permit that leads to additional permits.

DSD continued to explain that the department is currently working on a new process integrating zoning, business tax, and planning into a single digitized system. DSD understands the challenges within the business community which include a lack of awareness about business and county tax requirements, the impact of change-of-use regulations, and difficulties they faced as small businesses. DSD stated changes made in the planning of the business, dwellings with duplexes, and change-of-use permits are the department's biggest challenges when it comes to the business process.

EDAB expressed interest in recommending regulatory changes to better support small businesses, particularly regarding zoning, parking, and permitting challenges. One suggestion from the board was simplifying procedures to make it easier for small businesses to hire consultants for guidance. DSD ensured the department assists in guiding business applicants through every step of the process which additionally includes guiding developers with high rises and responding to city complaints.

DSD staff reminded members that all business owners are recommended and encouraged by DSD staff to apply for the business tax prior to proceeding to signing any additional space. EDAB members expressed the need for property owners leasing their space to check first if the interested tenant has a business tax with the city. DSD mentioned the challenge many business owners face due to signing a lease and not revising if their business meets the zoning criteria and city codes. This mistake slows the process of getting their business running and may require additional permits. DSD provides business applicants with a check list to help them understand the required documentation for any change-of-use permitting.

The board asked DSD what would be the best way to educate business applicants and how they could help. DSD responded by saying educating small business owners on the business tax process and permitting would be beneficial. The board discussed the need to implement educational strategies through city channels for business owners to understand the business tax requirements to facilitate the process. Member DeJager volunteered to draft a language to recommend to the commission to implement educational strategies for business owners and entrepreneurs. Members agreed and the Member DeJager will bring to the next meeting a drafted recommendation for review.

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Additional discussions with DSD covered mixed-use development, the role of planning and maintaining city aesthetics. DSD Staff mentioned the Planning Division has a greater window of opportunity to work with business applicants to have the permits of occupancy approved. Members continued to ask questions regarding the approval of design, DSD mentioned they could not speak on behalf of the planning division; however, they could provide general answers. DSD recommended EDAB Members to speak to Jim Hetzel, the Principal Planner with DSD, to learn more about the approval of the design process. Members agreed and requested to have a city staff from the Urban Design and Planning Division be invited as a guest speaker for the March meeting.

Vice Chair Klenet begins to explain the economic impact of the marine yacht refurbishing industry. Throughout the discussion, Vice Chair proposed if a field trip to be organized to examine the economic impact in the city and to meet the marine industry experts. City Liaison, Von Howard, reminded the board that meetings cannot take place outside the assigned EDAB meeting space or outside any approved city building meeting space. Members asked City Liaisons, Von and Melissa, if they could get clarification in having the board members get a tour of the yacht refurbishing industry.

The board agreed to draft a recommendation for the City Commission, with Marianne taking the lead in drafting the recommendation for the next meeting. The meeting concluded with all board members in favor of having Member DeJager draft a recommendation for the City Commission and to invite a City employee from the Urban Design and Planning Division to speak on the planning building process.

IV. Areas of Concentration

There were no reports or updates provided by the members.

V. Division Reports

There were no Division reports.

VI. Meeting adjourned at 4:09 PM.

With no further business, Chair Bargioni motioned to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Member DeJager and seconded by Vice Chair Klenet. The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 PM.

The next EDAB meeting will be March 12, 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.