



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

March 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	A	9	4
Jay Adams	P	10	1
William Feinberg	P	16	2
Nicolas Kollias	P	8	2
Marianna S. DeJager	P	8	1
Latasha Gorman	A	3	2
Allyson Meyers	A	2	0
Jason Hughes	P	1	0

Staff

Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Not Present)
 Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager (Not Present)
 Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)
 Melissa Mata, Management Fellow (Present)
 Jim Hetzel, Principal Urban Planner (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, February 12, 2025. Motion moved by Member DeJager and seconded by Member Feinberg. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:18 PM.

III. Member Introductions

City Liaison, Melissa Mata, asked the Board if they could introduce themselves to welcome the new member, Jason Hughes, to the board. The members provided their name and a brief background of their occupation. Jason Hughes introduced himself by stating he has been part of past city boards and was happy to be involved with the EDAB Board. Members welcomed Mr. Hughes to the meeting.

IV. Guest Speakers, City of Fort Lauderdale Development Services Department & Broward County Resilient Environment Department

The meeting begin with its first item of welcoming the guest speakers from the City of fort Lauderdale and Broward County. City Liaison, Melissa Mata, began by stating the reason the guest speakers were invited was due to the Board’s request from the February meeting to understand

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the permitting process behind the building and planning permits from both ends of the City and County level. Ms. Mata asked the board to remain under discussion and not get into different discussion topics. Ms. Mata introduced Josie Sesodia, Director of the Urban Planning Division from the Resilient Environment Department of Broward County and Jim Hetzel, Principal Urban Planner of the Urban Design and Planning Division from the Development Services Department of the City of Fort Lauderdale. Jim Hetzel began the discussion by illustrating the steps of the permitting process through a presentation. Mr. Hetzel explained the length, the parties involved, and the strategies the City use to guide and help residents get their permits approved. Board members expressed how complex and overwhelming the process can be for a business owner due to the time it takes for permits to be approved. Members continued to express how challenging it is to understand the process, knowing every process may be different and may have different permitting requirements. One of the board members asked which business was the most challenging to be approved in time without many setbacks. Mr. Hetzel responded that childcare facilities were the most challenging due to the list of required approvals needed it to operate a safe and well established facility.

The discussion then transitioned with the members asking what the city has done to improve the complexities the department has seen throughout the years. Mr. Hetzel responded that after careful analysis and trends on the permitting process, the department has shortened the review process for applicants who do not need to go over a public hearing. He then proceeded to state how developments with a bigger impact had a longer review process. Developments such as developments in the Downtown area of the city are more than likely to take longer for review due to the high foot traffic and the impact the business will have once it operates. For smaller businesses, the department has made amendments to lower the review process to get the permits approved without any issues. Members asked what other factors affect the review process with Mr. Hetzel responding to the use of parking spaces. Mr. Hetzel reassured the members that the department is here to facilitate and guide the business owners through the process not to deter or to reject any applications.

By 3:50pm, City Liaison, Ms. Mata, reminded members to be aware of the time and respect Ms. Sesodia's time. Mr. Hetzel wrapped up his discussion by stating business owners can use the GIS maps from the city website as a resource. The maps provide blueprints for future land use and additional information to understand the zoning and permitting needed per property. Members were appreciative for Mr. Hetzel's time and asked for his contact information. Ms. Sesodia began her discussion by introducing herself and her career in urban planning. Ms. Sesodia transitioned to explain the County's process and how the department works with municipalities to ensure business owners cover the required permitting and impact fees. Ms. Sesodia stated the County is currently not accepting impact fees compared to city governments, however, the County does ensure the business owners comply with the environmental licenses to obtain the building and construction permits. Ms. Sesodia recommended for anyone who needed a building permit to

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schedule a meeting with the City and the County to facilitate the process and understand the permits needed from both ends of the government level. Having those meetings provides clarity as to what's expected from the process and the impact fees it may bring at the end of the application.

At the end of the discussion, the members expressed their appreciation of listening to both guest speakers and the benefits of learning from their expertise in the planning and building process. Member Feinberg expressed the need to know if there was any way the board could help "move the needle" for economic development to facilitate the challenges small business owners face during the building and construction permit process. Ms. Sesodia and Mr. Hetzel told the members to help other business owners in explaining the process and recommended maintaining clear communication with the city and county to facilitate the process. The discussion ended with the guest speakers providing their contact information and appreciating the Board's time to understand the process and be the voice of the business community in Fort Lauderdale.

V. Draft Language for the City Commission

The meeting moved to the next agenda item which is the discussion of reviewing the drafted recommendation to the City Commission drafted by Member DeJager. Due to the time the item came forward, the members agreed to discuss the item during the next meeting in April. Member Feinberg expressed he liked the points addressed in the drafted recommendation and other members followed in agreement. Chair Bargioni thanked Member DeJager for her time in drafting the recommendation and stated the City of Fort Lauderdale will be launching a business intelligence tool that covers most of the points in the drafted recommendation. Chair Bargioni moved the item to the next meeting agenda.

VI. EDAB Priorities 2025

Chair Bargioni continued the meeting by introducing the next item agenda. Chair Bargioni stated he had a meeting with Mayor Trantalis and Scott Wyman regarding EDAB's priorities. Chair Bargioni reminded the board that they cannot change the law, however, they can draft and make recommendations. He continued by stating Mayor Trantalis is looking for ideas and recommendations that are achievable in the future. Chair Bargioni requested the board to think about future themes, industries, and efforts that can be invested in the city to bring economic impact. Member Feinberg agreed to draft a recommendation with a list of industries that can have an impact on the workforce and to small business owners. Chair Bargioni agreed and stated they will first look over the drafted recommendation made by Member DeJager before moving forward with the list.

VII. Member Discussion

Members continued with an open discussion. Members began to announce the different restaurants opening in Fort Lauderdale and open spaces available for the use of meetings and

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workshops. Members discussed the challenges of finding parking in the Downtown areas and the importance of supporting local restaurants in the area.

VIII. Areas of Concentration

There were no reports or updates provided by the members.

IX. Division Reports

City Liaison, Ms. Mata, announced the soon to be launched business tool called SizeUp FTL. Ms. Mata introduced the new business intelligence tool to the board and explained how the resource can be useful to small business owners. Ms. Mata announced the business intelligence tool was accessible and free to all community members with no need to create any accounts to access the tool. She continued to state the Public Affairs Division would be hosting a virtual launch of SizeUp FTL on March 26, 2025, and requested the board members to assist in marketing the event. Ms. Mata proceeded to illustrate a short demo of the tools available and how members could use the tool for multiple market research strategies. The Members asked questions regarding the different resources of the tools and were excited to know how helpful the tool would be for small business owners.

The next item on the City's Division Report was Ms. Mata's request for the Board to participate in a video that would promote the Economic Development Advisory Board. The video would be in conjunction to Small Business Week happening from May 4 to May 10. Ms. Mata explained the guidelines and the objectives of the board and asked for 2 volunteers with the inclusion of the Chair and Vice Chair. Member Feinberg and Member DeJager volunteered and Chair Bargioni thanked them for their time to work with the City in promoting the video.

X. Meeting adjourned at 4:57 PM.

With no further business, Chair Bargioni motioned to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Member Feinberg and seconded by Member Kollias. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 PM.

The next EDAB meeting will be April 09, 2025, at DSD Building.

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