CITY OF FREEPORT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

430 North Brazosport Boulevard, Freeport, TX
Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

FEDC BOARD MEMBERS: Quorum Present

Directors:	
Josh Mitchell *(absent)*	President
Sandra Loeza	Vice President
Ken Tyner	Treasurer
David McGinty	Secretary
Shonda Marshall *(absent)*	
Mark Parker (*absent*)	
Ronnie Martin	

Robert Johnson: Executive Director
Lance Petty: City Manager (*absent*)
Jerry Cain: City Liaison
Loren Smith: EDC Attorney (*digital*)
Rachael Cohen: EDC Staff

I. Call to Order

Sandra Loeza called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. A quorum was present.

II. Invocation and Pledge

Ken Tyner led the invocation, and Robert Johnson led the pledge.

III. Citizens' Comments

IV. Consent Agenda

1. **Approve Meeting Minutes for February 11, 2025**
2. **Approve Financials**

David McGinty made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ken Tyner seconded. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. Discussion and Action Items

1. **Discuss and review Downtown and Main Street updates for January.**

   Robert Johnson opened the discussion by announcing the resignation of Wade Dillion, who served as the Museum Director and Main Street Coordinator. Mr. Dillion's departure prompted the cancellation of the March Main Street meeting, originally scheduled for March 20th, at 5 PM at Freeport City Hall. Mr. Johnson reported he remains in conversation with Mr. Dillion about the program's transition and had met with City Manager Lance Petty to discuss potential next steps for staffing and continuity. Mr. Johnson met with the Mainstreet President, Irene, on how to move forward because of his background in the program. Mr. Johnson expressed appreciation for Mr. Dillion's contributions and noted that Main Street, Code Enforcement, and EDC now meet weekly, an increase from the prior biweekly schedule, and are going to continue even with the staffing changes.

   Mr. Johnson stated that the Cinco de Mayo Festival is unlikely to be held this year due to the current lack of available personnel to coordinate it. He then provided development updates, including ongoing construction at Sandra Woodwickie's building, currently subcontracted through Chris Duncan.

   Robert Johnson shared that he and Lance had received a formal request from Roshan Harintha, owner of Ocean Food Market, for a Chapter 380 tax abatement. At Lance's request, Robert drafted a graduated incentive plan to reduce the financial shock of increased taxes following commercial property improvements.

   Mr. Johnson also noted recent outreach with potential downtown investors: Dino Mureno, the owner of the historic Arcadia building, and Jason Williams, who is interested in purchasing 131 W. Broad. Robert concluded by reiterating that the EDC remains committed to facilitating downtown revitalization and development partnerships.

2. **Discuss and update the hotel feasibility study site visit.**

   Board member Ken requested an update by asking for an update on the hotel feasibility study. Robert Johnson explained that Jessica Junker, a representative from the Score Distinction Group, had not yet arrived in Freeport but was scheduled to visit the following day, Wednesday, March 12. Her initial site visit had been delayed multiple times due to severe winter weather in Wisconsin, where she is based. Robert explained that this visit was essential to allow the consultant to familiarize herself with Freeport's landscape, commercial potential, and hotel market viability.

   During the discussion, Robert noted that City Manager Lance Petty had generously offered his city vehicle for Jessica's use during the visit. Sandra also stated she would be present to guide Jessica on a tour of the city to identify suitable locations for potential hotel development. The board reiterated the importance of hospitality industry growth for the local economy and expressed collective support for completing the feasibility study.

   No formal motions were made; however, the board directed staff to ensure Jessica was introduced to key commercial property owners and provided context about Freeport's ongoing revitalization efforts. There was consensus that results from her visit and subsequent report would be discussed at the next regular board meeting. While no formal motions were made, consensus was reached to continue supporting the feasibility process and to await the consultant's written report following her site evaluation. Board members expressed interest in receiving her impressions after the site tour and requested that Robert provide any updates and findings at the next regular board meeting.

3. **Discuss and take possible action on SitNBull Business Improvement Grant**

Robert Johnson introduced the topic on the SitNBull Business Improvement Grant and invited Holden Ezell, representing the Building Department, to join him in providing updates. The board was informed that the grant recipient had encountered multiple contractor-related setbacks. Specifically, the original contractor's license had been revoked, which halted progress on the exterior stucco facade work. At the time of the meeting, a new contractor had not yet been secured to complete the project.

Holden explained that electrical work on-site had resumed and was being handled by Penny Electric, a contractor appropriately licensed and permitted through the City. A stop work order was issued on February 28 due to issues surrounding subcontractor oversight and permit deficiencies. Mr. Steed, the initial lead contractor, had formally withdrawn support for the project and notified staff of his disengagement via email.

Robert noted that fire suppression installation was proceeding with assistance from Jason, the fire marshal, and that work was not affected by the general permitting issues. While no immediate action was taken by the board, Robert raised the possibility of needing to extend the grant timeline if construction delays continued. Board members agreed on the importance of monitoring progress closely and directed staff to maintain regular updates. No formal motion was made, but there was consensus to keep the grant active while progress continues under city supervision.

4. **Discuss and update on progress with wayfinding information.**

Robert Johnson introduced the topic on the city's wayfinding efforts by reflecting on the positive public response to the initial signage initiative and noting the need to reference past planning documents. He requested board input regarding any archived documentation from previous efforts, particularly a map that identified proposed signage placement. David confirmed that a previous contractor had created such a map. Board members speculated that the file might still exist in the museum's digital archives or in the files managed by Mr. Dillion.

Robert stated that retrieving the original placement map would be key to avoiding unnecessary expenditures on duplicative design services. In the meantime, quotes had been collected from both signage designers and fabricators. If the prior layout is found, the board suggested moving forward directly with fabrication.

Additionally, there was brief discussion on the concept of citywide rebranding. While generally supported in spirit, Sandra emphasized that any rebranding effort would require extensive coordination across departments and significant financial resources. The board agreed to revisit that conversation after addressing the current wayfinding signage needs. No motions were made during the discussion.

5. **Discuss the Ethics Policy (Marshall)**

   Robert Johnson introduced the topic on the Ethics Policy, noting that it had been placed on the agenda at the request of board member Ms. Shonda Marshall. When asked to elaborate, Shonda stated she wanted to ensure that the board had a current and active ethics policy in place. Robert confirmed that the EDC's ethics policy had been formally adopted by board vote in September 2024 and remains in effect. He stated that there had been no issues brought forward requiring revision or enforcement of the policy, and that staff were prepared to circulate copies to any board member who wanted a refresher. With no further questions or proposals presented, the board moved on to the next agenda item. No motions were made.

6. **Discuss and update on Retail Strategies (Marshall)**

   Robert Johnson provided the update on Retail Strategies by noting that the February meeting had been canceled due to the Presidents Day holiday. However, he shared that the group had submitted a written summary outlining their continued outreach to several national retailers. Robert emphasized that these efforts were ongoing and would lead into their representation of Freeport at the ICSC Red River conference and later at the national event in Las Vegas. He also mentioned that Retail Strategies had been in communication with David Chen, formerly of Dollar General, who has continued to provide valuable connections and insights. The board briefly discussed the importance of having local representation at these trade shows and expressed appreciation for Retail Strategies' persistence. No formal actions or motions were made.

VI. Board and Executive Director Comments

VII. Executive Session- Adjourn into Executive Session

It is now 6:55 p.m., and I hereby recess the regular session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation meeting and do hereby convene into executive session in compliance with Texas Government Code: Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters).

1. Update on ongoing: real property contract and possible sale of the Skinner Street property.
2. Discuss and update on possible upcoming projects related to Economic and Community Development Matters
3. Update on ongoing litigation: Realty World and A&T.
4. Discuss the Executive Director Evaluation. (Marshall)

Reconvene into an Open Session

Board President's statement:

It is now 7:34 p.m., and I hereby close the executive session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation and do hereby reconvene the regular open session and take possible action on items mentioned in the executive session.

VIII. Adjourn

Sandra Loeza requested a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Ken Tyner made the motion, seconded by Ronnie Martin. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Sandra Loeza adjourned the board meeting at 7:35 p.m.