CITY OF FREEPORT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

430 North Brazosport Boulevard, Freeport, TX

Tuesday, April 8th, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

FEDC BOARD MEMBERS: Quorum Present

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

Robert Johnson: Executive Director

Lance Petty: City Manager

Jerry Cain: City Liaison

Loren Smith: EDC Attorney (*digital*)

Rachael Cohen: EDC Staff

I. Call to Order

Josh Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

II. Invocation and Pledge

Shonda Marshall led the invocation, and Mark Parker led the pledge.

III. Citizens' Comments

IV. Consent Agenda

1. **Approve Meeting Minutes for April 8th, 2025**
2. **Approve Financials**

Ken Tyner made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ronnie Martin seconded.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. Discussion and Action Items

1. **Discuss and take possible action on marketing sponsorship for the 2025 Texas LULAC District VII Convention.**

Robert Johnson introduced the item by welcoming Anna Silbas, President of the Brazosport LULAC Council 4655, who formally requested a $500 marketing sponsorship from the EDC. The request supports their upcoming District VIII Convention, to be held on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at the ABC Texas Gulf Coast venue in Freeport.

Ms. Silbas shared that this annual event includes delegates from across the region and features speakers such as Dr. Vincent Solis from Brazosport College and representatives from MALDEF, UTMB, and the Brazoria County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, among others. Programming will focus on workforce diversity, healthcare access, and minority business support, including a ribbon-cutting for HUB-certified businesses.

A pre-convention mixer will be hosted Friday, April 11, at Miss Lounge, which is being donated by the owner for the event. Convention guests are encouraged to stay at the new Freeport hotel, and breakfast for attendees will be sourced locally from Lupita’s Tacos, promoting Freeport businesses.

As part of the sponsorship, the EDC logo will be included in printed materials and recognized during the event. Ms. Silbas emphasized LULAC’s broader commitment to education and scholarships for local high school students, as well as the event's potential to boost local economic activity.

Ronnie Martin made a motion to approve a $500 sponsorship for the 2025 Texas LULAC District VIII Convention. Sandra Loeza seconded. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

2. **Discuss and review downtown and Main Street updates.**

Robert Johnson reported on recent leadership changes and developments within the Main Street program. Wade Dillon, the former Main Street Director, had recently resigned, prompting a pause in program coordination and the cancellation of the March 20 Main Street meeting.

Robert and City Manager Lance Petty have received 16 applications for the role and are prioritizing hiring a qualified candidate rather than rushing the process. Robert also shared that he and Irene (Main Street Board President) are temporarily overseeing program continuity.

He acknowledged the importance of the Main Street Program to Freeport’s downtown revitalization and confirmed that weekly coordination meetings involving Main Street, Code Enforcement, Building Inspection, and the EDC are continuing.

Robert also announced that the Freeport Historical Commission was recognized by City Council during a recent meeting for its contributions to heritage tourism, a key aspect of Main Street's mission.

No motion was made.

3. **Discuss and take possible action on door replacements for 210 W. Park**

Robert Johnson reported on a structural and safety issue involving the rear portion of the property located at 210 W. Park. On a recent day with strong winds, a door at the back of the building was either blown or kicked over. Emergency repairs were promptly authorized by Robert and completed by Turbeville Construction at a cost of $300 to restore security and access to the site.

However, the situation escalated after an inspection conducted by James Turbeville, who left a detailed written assessment. His findings revealed that the rear portion of the building—roughly a 10-foot extension—was not original construction and appeared to have been added without proper permitting. Key issues from the inspection included:

- Structural dependence: The extension's walls were found to be tied into the adjacent buildings at 208 and 212 W. Park, meaning 210 does not have its own rear structural walls.
- Ownership conflict: According to the city's records and the inspector's findings, the two rear walls at the back of the addition technically belong to the neighboring properties, not to 210 W. Park.
- Foundation concerns: There was uncertainty around the thickness and integrity of the slab foundation beneath the extension. Without proof of sufficient engineering, rebuilding or reinforcing the addition could violate building codes and pose risks.
- Required reconstruction: Turbeville recommended that if the owner or tenant wishes to rebuild the rear portion legally, it would necessitate:
  - Demolition of the current addition.
  - New engineered drawings.
  - A properly poured foundation including a 24"x24" perimeter beam and 12"x6" stem wall, reinforced with dowels and epoxy anchored into the slab.
  - Removal of any remaining shared wall sections.

The EDC board acknowledged the complexity and legal implications of the situation. Several members, including Sandra Loeza and Ronnie Martin, expressed concern about the financial burden on the city if it were to subsidize repairs for an illegally expanded structure. There was also discussion about the importance of clarifying property boundaries, permitting history, and the current tenant's lease terms or responsibilities before any decisions were made.

City Manager Lance Petty was said to be involved in the assessment, and it was noted that further evaluation and possibly legal negotiation would be necessary—especially since the owner of the property may have unknowingly inherited the issue.

Due to the potential liability and the need for legal review, the board moved this item into Executive Session for further discussion on potential remedies, funding options (if any), and next steps regarding enforcement or support.

No motion was made.

4. **Discuss and take possible action on the Business Improvement Grant: Freeport Veterinary Medical Clinic.**

Robert Johnson, EDC Executive Director, introduced this item by commending Dr. Kody Goerdel, DVM, a long-standing business owner and practicing veterinarian in Freeport since 2015. Dr. Goerdel was present to request reimbursement under the Business Improvement Grant Program for significant repairs made to his boarding and veterinary facility, which sustained severe structural damage during Hurricane Beryl.

Dr. Goerdel provided the board with a detailed account of the damage and the subsequent efforts required to restore partial and eventual full operation of the clinic. He explained:

- During the storm, approximately half of the facility's roof was ripped off, with the roofing materials found scattered in the street behind the clinic.
- The compromised structure led to catastrophic water intrusion, necessitating a complete demolition of the interior down to the studs.
- He engaged an engineer to redesign the roof structure, including adjustments to accommodate the building's flat roof, which has posed recurring drainage issues during subsequent rainstorms.
- As of the meeting date, the facility was still enduring some issues due to residual vulnerabilities in the flat roof design, which cannot be easily patched without a full redesign and sealing.

Dr. Goerdel noted that he had to make quick, decisive repairs out of pocket due to the urgent need to preserve operational capacity and avoid further losses. Waiting for the Small Business Administration (SBA) or insurance processes would have delayed the restoration process significantly and could have jeopardized the clinic's long-term viability.

Key financial details provided:

- The total estimated cost of repairs exceeded $120,000.
- The insurance company and the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) covered a portion of the damage, paying out approximately 50%–75% of the total cost.
- Despite this assistance, around $45,000 remained unpaid, and those costs were absorbed personally by Dr. Goerdel to protect his clients, employees, and animals in care.
- He emphasized that the boarded areas of the clinic—32 rooms in total—were out of commission for an extended period, eliminating a major source of the business's revenue.

Robert Johnson clarified that Dr. Goerdel had submitted all required receipts and documentation, and EDC staff had thoroughly reviewed the grant request. Based on allowable expenditures under the Business Improvement Grant policy, the EDC could approve a reimbursement of $23,338, which falls within the program's financial limits.

There was a brief discussion among board members about the level of financial hardship endured and the vital nature of the clinic's services. The board commended Dr. Goerdel for his commitment to staying open and restoring the business swiftly despite limited financial assistance.

Ronnie Martin made a motion to approve a $23,338 Business Improvement Grant for Freeport Veterinary Medical Clinic. Sandra Loeza seconded. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. **Discuss take possible action on the Business Improvement Grant: On the River**

Robert Johnson introduced the item by providing background on the ongoing application from Becka Ryder, the owner of On the River, a hospitality-focused business located in Freeport's downtown district. Becka had previously submitted preliminary materials for a Business Improvement Grant, and EDC staff had been working with her to finalize the request. Her project was intended to improve the interior and exterior of the building in a way that would activate the space, draw tourism, and contribute to the revitalization of the riverfront area.

However, during one of the weekly coordination meetings held every Tuesday between EDC, Code Enforcement, Building Inspection, and Main Street staff, a significant problem was uncovered regarding the permitting status of the work being performed at her property.

Robert explained the situation as follows:

- Becka believed that her contractor had taken responsibility for acquiring all necessary permits for the planned improvements.
- However, Code Enforcement had no records on file for the scope of work being conducted. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the contractor never submitted any permit applications, nor were city officials notified of the intended renovations.
- Because of this, the entire project was out of compliance with the City's building and safety codes. The city was unaware of structural changes, and the Code Department expressed concern about safety and oversight.

Robert clarified that this discovery meant Becka's application, although initially strong in concept and scope, could not move forward in its current state. According to the terms of the EDC's Business Improvement Grant program:

- All improvement projects must be pre-approved, including proper documentation of permits, estimates, and clear scope of work descriptions.
- Applicants must demonstrate compliance with City regulations at every stage, including engagement with Code Enforcement, where applicable.

  Despite the permitting lapse, Robert emphasized that Becka had been cooperative once the issue was identified. She agreed to:

- Pause the grant application until the permitting process could be corrected.
- Work with her contractor to submit the necessary paperwork to the City of Freeport.
- Return to the EDC with an updated grant application that included documentation verifying full compliance.

Board members expressed appreciation for Becka's willingness to address the issue proactively and supported the decision to delay funding until the project meets all regulatory standards. Several members reiterated the importance of contractor accountability and noted this instance as a reminder of the need for better applicant education during the intake phase of the grant program.

No motion was made. Item postponed to the May 2025 meeting, pending permit verification and revised documentation.

6. **Discuss take possible action on the Business Improvement Grant: Lone Star Fishing Co.**

Robert Johnson briefed the board on a preliminary application from Alyssa, owner of **Lone Star Fishing**, a business proposing a creative retail and service model centered on fishing, recreation, and coastal tourism.

Alyssa approached the EDC less than two weeks before the meeting to express interest in the Business Improvement Grant program. Robert explained that:

- While her concept was **innovative and aligned with downtown revitalization goals**, the application was **submitted with insufficient lead time**.

- Alyssa **was unable to provide required supporting documents**—including contractor estimates, lease or ownership verification, and project scope—by the board's deadline.
- Robert left the item on the agenda in the event she completed the paperwork by Friday; however, that did not occur.

He noted that Alyssa was responsive and professional in communications and has indicated her intent to **finalize and resubmit** her materials for consideration at the next meeting.

No motion was made. Item postponed to the May 2025 meeting.

VI. Board and Executive Director Comments

VII. Executive Session- Adjourn into Executive Session

It is now 6:49 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. Discuss and update on possible upcoming projects related to Economic and Community Development Matters
2. Update on ongoing litigation: Realty World and A&T.

Reconvene into an Open Session

Board President's statement:
It is now 7:44 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.

Sandra Loeza made the motion, seconded by Ken Tyner. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Josh Mitchell adjourned the board meeting at 7:45 p.m.