

# City of Fort Lauderdale

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## Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

11:30 AM

Joint Workshop with Economic Development Advisory Board

The Parker

707 Northeast 8th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304

## **CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP**

*FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION*

*DEAN J. TRANTALIS Mayor*

*PAM BEASLEY-PITTMAN Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District III*

*JOHN C. HERBST Commissioner - District I*

*STEVEN GLASSMAN Commissioner - District II*

*WARREN STURMAN Commissioner - District IV*

*GREG CHAVARRIA, City Manager*

*DAVID R. SOLOMAN, City Clerk*

*D'WAYNE M. SPENCE, Interim City Attorney*

*PATRICK REILLY, City Auditor*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Trantalis called the meeting to order at 11:54 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Commission Members Present:** Commissioner John C. Herbst, Commissioner Steven Glassman, Vice Mayor Pamela Beasley-Pittman, Commissioner Warren Sturman, and Mayor Dean J. Trantalis

**Economic Development Advisory Board Members Present:** Vice Chair Enrique Bargioni, Jay Adams, Kevin Cochrane, William Feinberg, and Russ Klenet

**Economic Development Advisory Board Members Not Present:** Chair Michael Stara, Dudley Etienne-Harvard, and Kenneth Herz

**QUORUM ESTABLISHED**

**Also Present:** City Manager Greg Chavarria, City Clerk David R. Soloman, Interim City Attorney D'Wayne M. Spence, and City Auditor Patrick Reilly

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS****BUS-1** [23-0573](#)

Joint Workshop with the Economic Development Advisory Board to Discuss Economic Development - (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

City Manager Greg Chavarria provided an overview. Mayor Trantalis remarked on the importance of the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB).

Daphnee Sainvil, Government Affairs & Economic Development Manager, confirmed a Commission priority is economic development and diversity. The EDAB is seeking Commission guidance on how to move forward, whether using financial incentives or a consultant to determine ways to spur economic diversification and growth.

Vice Chair Enrique Bargioni remarked on the EDAB's role in economic development and welcomes Commission feedback on board priorities. EDAB discussions included broad economic incentive programs, using a consultant to identify key industries, and offering financial support to FAT Village and MASS District events. Vice Chair Bargioni explained

his perspective and the diverse ideas of EDAB members.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions, EDAB Member Kevin Cochrane discussed his recommendation to harness the City's burgeoning young downtown workforce along with diversification by attracting additional digital start-up companies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI) companies. He explained related details and discussed the City of Miami pioneering these types of efforts and cited related examples, including the website resource *Refresh Miami*. Further comment and discussion ensued.

EDAB Member William Feinberg discussed his viewpoint and the need for Commission input. He remarked on feedback from the construction industry regarding doing business with the City and the need to streamline Building Department processes. Further comment and discussion ensued regarding economic development efforts of numerous entities and associated efforts.

EDAB Member Russ Klenet discussed existing groups working to spur economic development. He confirmed tourism, the marine industry, and development are the City's primary industries, and remarked on his viewpoint regarding the City becoming a tech hub. Mr. Klenet commented on hiring a consultant to advise the City about which industries are considering the City as a possible area to relocate and remarked on the need for additional office space in the downtown area.

Mr. Klenet recommended coordination with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, and Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and suggested the EDAB holding semi-annual or quarterly meetings with these organizations.

Mr. Klenet acknowledged the efforts of Zoie Saunders, Chief Education Officer, and her work with the DDA towards spurring economic development through improving educational opportunities for students. He noted the importance of mobility, education, and safety to attract companies to spur economic growth.

EDAB Member Jay Adams remarked on his investment in the City, acknowledged the assistance of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), and noted the large number of residential units built in the City compared to other major cities. He commented on the importance and the need to focus on mobility, safety, and lifestyle factors to spur economic development and cited examples.

Vice Chair Bargioni noted that small start-up companies indicate where

the economy will be in the future, commented on opportunities available to the City, and expounded on his viewpoint. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Mr. Cochrane reiterated that lifestyle is paramount to the goal of spurring economic development.

Mr. Klenet remarked on his perspective regarding the number of special events in the City, their impact on lifestyle, urged continued support of the small and mid-size events in neighborhoods, and recommended an increase in the City's social media presence.

Commissioner Herbst discussed his viewpoint, the need to continue the pursuit of economic diversification to compete with businesses relocating to Miami and Palm Beach, including information technology, to attract high-wage base workers with the ability to work remotely, and cited examples. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman remarked on her viewpoint regarding the EDAB. In response to Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman's question regarding collaboration efforts, Mr. Klenet discussed EDAB member participation with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and acknowledged the opportunity to improve collaboration.

Mayor Trantalis noted that Enterprise Florida was defunded and merged with another State agency. He expounded on Enterprise Florida's purpose and his viewpoint.

Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman confirmed the need for the City to take the initiative to move forward with economic development efforts, including promoting the City on social media.

Mr. Adams discussed his experience and economic incentives related to rent reduction that do not have a significant impact. He confirmed the need for state-of-the-art buildings and noted the high cost of those buildings in the downtown area, which only a small segment of businesses can afford. Mr. Adams explained opportunities for tech companies in the Uptown area to occupy state-of-the-art buildings at a significantly lower price point.

Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman remarked on AI and the opportunity to become a Smart City that would attract companies relocating from other areas of the country.

Mr. Cochrane confirmed he is involved with software infrastructure, noted that South Florida universities are rapidly focusing on AI and machine learning, and expounded on related information, including the need to focus on ensuring those AI and machine learning engineer graduates remain in South Florida to start businesses. Further comment and discussion ensued.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' question, Mr. Cochrane confirmed any effort by the Commission to assist with introductions to pursue related goals would be beneficial. Mr. Klenet confirmed universities are the incubator for new technology start-ups and expounded on his viewpoint. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Mayor Trantalis remarked on previous discussions about the City being attractive to the financial services sector.

Commissioner Glassman discussed the state-of-the-art office space being built in FAT Village. He recommended better synergy between the EDAB and the Commission, including the EDAB establishing a mission and strategic plan, and providing recommendations via Communications to the City Commission. Commissioner Glassman remarked on revisiting staffing of an Economic Development Manager position. Mayor Trantalis noted Ms. Sainvil's responsibility as an Economic Development Manager. Further comment and discussion ensued.

City Manager Chavarria remarked on the successful efforts of Ms. Sainvil and cited examples of plans moving forward to establish an Economic Development Management Team that includes rebranding government affairs and economic development as a Public Affairs Office. He remarked on goals moving forward to market the City for increased economic growth.

Commissioner Glassman discussed his viewpoint and requested the new Public Affairs Office and EDAB work closely with the real estate industry to inform businesses about the City's education system. He remarked on the need to ensure the City is attractive, welcoming, and recommended EDAB having a strategic plan.

Mr. Adams discussed encouraging developers to pursue mixed-use development that includes lifestyle, restaurants, residential, and transportation elements. Mayor Trantalis concurred, expounded on his viewpoint, and cited examples. Further comment and discussion ensued. Mr. Adams recommended pursuing local marketing in all industries. Mayor Trantalis concurred.

Vice Chair Bargioni commented on attracting annual meetings of wealthy family offices and cited examples. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Commissioner Sturman remarked on Commission efforts towards making the City an attractive relocation destination for industries with the Commission goals of improving parks, transportation, education, and public safety. He expounded on related efforts, including mobility, walkability, and bicycling, which translates into economic development.

In response to Commissioner Sturman's question, Mr. Feinberg confirmed conversations with film industry representatives and input from Broward County Film Commissioner Sandy Lighterman. Mr. Feinberg said that the film industry would be an essential component towards drawing new technology, including AI and machine learning industry start-ups to the City. Mayor Trantalis concurred and discussed moving forward with a new website, introducing EDAB Members to local college presidents to generate more interest in information technology graduates. He remarked on aspects of maintaining a sustainable economy to draw residents to the City. Mayor Trantalis encouraged the EDAB to work with Ms. Sainvil and City Manager Chavarria toward these goals.

Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman remarked on the need for promotion and branding efforts to include all Districts and remarked on the needs of District 3.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Trantalis adjourned the meeting at 12:54 p.m.