

**ALBEMARLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES
Special Virtual Meeting July 22, 2025
Virtually, 3:30 p.m.**

Directors present: Don Long, Chair; Jeff Morrill, Vice-chair; Andrea Johnson, David Storm; Steve Hood; Frank Friedman (arrived at 4:03pm), Bill Mechnick

Directors absent: None

Staff present: Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development; Johnathan Newberry, Deputy Director of Economic Development; Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager; Avery Thompson, Management Analyst III; Jeanette Ark, Project Manager; Richard DeLoria, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, Board of Supervisors Liaison to the EDA, Rivanna District; Trevor Henry, Deputy County Executive

Staff absent: None

1. Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Matters from the Public

Chair Long read the rules for matters from the public.

Joy Heyrman, Vice President of Historic Batesville, expressed concerns about the Economic Development strategic plan, as it did not reflect her community values or vision for the future. She said it was underspecified in terms of any impacts, ignored environmental concerns, proposed a drastic growth strategy, and lacked transparency. She requested that they schedule a meeting with residents of rural communities and the Board of Supervisors prior to adoption.

3. New Business

a. Economic Development Strategic Plan

Vice Chair Morrill proposed revisions to the vision and mission of the plan, aiming to balance growth with its negative impacts and prioritize human flourishing. He said he would prefer to combine the vision and mission, but he was open to keeping them separate. He suggested a revised vision that emphasizes economic prosperity, full employment opportunity, and environmental sustainability while preserving quality of life. He also proposed a revised mission that focuses on delivering lasting prosperity for residents by expanding employment opportunities, strengthening and diversifying the tax base, and supporting local businesses and redevelopment while protecting the environment and exceptional quality of life.

Chair Long asked Ms. Kilroy to provide her opinion on the role of a vision and mission statement.

Ms. Kilroy explained that a vision and a mission are consistent with the County's strategic approach, and they are often used together to provide flexibility in communication. A vision is aspirational, outlining the desired future state, while a mission is more specific, defining the role in achieving that vision.

Mr. Mechnick noted that the strategic plan was only a component of the broader comprehensive plan process, focusing on economic development, and it was intended to align with the overall community vision and quality of life goals. The plan's ambitious goals and vision were intentionally broad, but it was essential to clearly define what was included and what was not, and there were external processes to help implement the goals and vision. He cautioned against diluting the intensity of the economic development plan.

Mr. Storm said he believed the current drafts of the plan felt business-centric and full of jargon. He noted that Mr. Morrill's proposed revisions made the mission and vision more inclusive and approachable.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said she had concerns about certain phrases, such as "will achieve" and "full employment," which she believed were almost promises that could never be fulfilled. She said she was not against incorporating the proposed changes into the draft if they were revised slightly.

Director Friedman joined the meeting at 4:03 pm.

Mr. Friedman said he thought the consultants' vision and mission statements should be adopted, rather than being revised. He expressed concerns that revising the statements could lead to differing interpretations and that certain terms, such as "exceptional quality of life," can be misleading and open to various interpretations.

Mr. Friedman said he was not impressed with the consultants' work, citing a lack of strategic planning and clear priorities. He noted that they provided a laundry list of 100 suggested actions, but there was no prioritization or division of responsibilities. He questioned the consultants' approach, suggesting that they should have provided more specific guidance on marketing and branding efforts, among other items. He said that the vision and mission statements were not the primary concern, but rather the actions and priorities outlined in the draft.

Chair Long noted his positive experience with the consultants, stating that he believed they provided valuable feedback and met his expectations. He noted that the consultants were asked to develop a plan to a certain point, which they did.

Ms. Kilroy explained that the County's strategic plans are not implementation plans, but rather high-level efforts to set direction and allocate resources. These plans are used in conjunction with annual budgeting to determine how to advance initiatives,

considering macroeconomic factors, environmental considerations, and opportunities that present themselves in real-time. The goal is to focus on key areas, set goals, and use the plan as a decision-making tool to allocate resources effectively. She brought up the County's broader vision and mission statement, which encompassed all of the work that it did.

Chair Long agreed that the plan should clarify that economic development was done in the context of making the County a good place to live. He said that they should balance protecting the environment with a thriving economy. He believed the plan provided a framework for making informed decisions, allowing for a focus on specific areas and ensuring that projects aligned with the County's goals.

Mr. Morrill discussed the benefits of allowing restaurants in rural areas. He proposed that the County allow restaurants in the rural area through a special use permit process by amending the Agribusiness Economy Goal in Section 3.7 on Page 41.

Mr. Hood said he agreed with the proposed language.

Mr. Storm noted that the proposal related specifically to Strategy 4.5, which focused on expanding destination restaurant entertainment and retail experiences. He said that it would help increase the quality of life in the County.

Chair Long said he supported the proposal.

Mr. Friedman said he supported the proposal.

Ms. Kilroy said this was an example for how the strategic plan could kickoff processes to change County policy. She noted that including the language did not constitute approval, but it allowed the County to start looking at next steps.

Mr. Storm said he had some suggestions for the draft plan regarding specific language, but he would share those with staff offline.

Ms. Kilroy announced that staff uploaded the draft plan to the County's website at engage.albemarle.org/edsp, and there was an opportunity to submit public comment. She said that comments would be open through August 8, and they would provide an update to the EDA and the Board of Supervisors prior to the August 13 joint meeting.

4. Adjourn

Chair Long adjourned the meeting at 4:43pm The next meeting is August 13, 2025 in Room 241.

Teste: _____
Donald Long, Chair

Approved: _____
Emily Kilroy, Assistant Secretary