

**ALBEMARLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES
February 5, 2026
Virtual, 4:00 p.m.**

Directors present: Don Long, Chair; Steve Hood, Vice-chair; Andrea Johnson, David Storm; Frank Friedman, Bill Mechnick, Andrew Cox

Directors absent: None

Staff present: Emily Kilroy, Director of Economic Development; Ashley Hernandorena, Business Development Manager; Avery Thompson, Management Analyst III; Sabawoon Ahmadzai, Senior Manager of Economic Development; Lauren Bodhan, Senior Assistant County Attorney; Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, Board of Supervisors Liaison to the Economic Development Authority (EDA), Rivanna District; Trevor Henry, Deputy County Executive

Staff absent: None

Other Presenters Present: Steven Pedigo, Civic Sol

1. Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. Matters from the Public

There were none.

3. Unfinished Business

a. Economic Development Strategic Plan Implementation Work Session

Steven Pedigo, Partner & Co-Founder of CivicSol, said that the work session was aimed to explore how the EDA could support the work of the strategic plan. He said they would receive a presentation from John Provo, Executive Director of Virginia Tech's Center for Economic & Community Engagement, on the role of EDA boards across Virginia. He said that Marjette Upshur, Director of Economic Development for the City of Lynchburg, would join the discussion.

John Provo, Executive Director of Virginia Tech's Center for Economic & Community Engagement, provided context about his role as the director of a university engagement center within Virginia Tech. He highlighted some specific projects and initiatives his team was involved in, and he reviewed the history of economic development in Virginia. He covered several examples of successful EDAs across the state, including Chesterfield County, Botetourt County, Pulaski County, Newport News, Fauquier County, Montgomery County, and Scott County. He highlighted the need for clear staffing and integration with the board to avoid negative headlines and ensure success.

Marjette Upshur, Director of Economic Development for the City of Lynchburg, shared her experience working as the Director of Economic Development for 20 years. She went over the challenges of working in a city without greenfield space, and the need to balance competing priorities such as public safety and education with economic development goals.

Ms. Upshur emphasized the importance of treating the EDA as a valuable asset that can provide a range of services, including property acquisition, leasing, and bond issuance, and emphasizing the need for clear policies and incentives to support economic development. She acknowledged the challenges of working with elected officials who may not fully understand the EDA's role and capabilities. She stressed the importance of having a brand identity and a clear ROI process to inform decision-making and drive economic growth.

Ms. Upshur emphasized the importance of setting clear policy and guidelines for the EDA, including incentive policy, investment policy, and a mission statement, so that the organization was aligned with the legislative body. She discussed the need for clear and accessible information, such as an up-to-date website, so that it was easier to find resources and potential opportunities.

Mr. Long asked how Ms. Upshur used the committee structure. He asked if Lynchburg provided the EDA with a separate funding account and whether they provided staffing.

Ms. Upshur explained the EDA structure, noting that it was supported by city staff, but they had their own bank account, attorney, and CPA firm, which were funded through the interest on industrial revenue bonds. She said that the EDA had its own committees, staffed by EDA members, that met after each meeting to discuss and make recommendations, which were then brought back to the full authority for approval.

Mr. Friedman asked what the most significant initiative undertaken by the EDA was.

Ms. Upshur said that increasing air service to the City airport was one of her greatest initiatives. She said that starting in March, they would have expanded air service, including to Dulles and Chicago, that had not existed in the City since the mid 2000s. She highlighted the City's branding, an internship program, and new teacher rent stipend initiatives to attract talent as significant projects.

Mr. Pedigo opened the floor for comments and takeaways from the directors.

Mr. Mechnick highlighted the importance of conducting a capacity analysis to understand the potential impact of available resources and what could be accomplished.

Mr. Friedman noted that the Lynchburg EDA appeared to have more autonomy, while the County's EDA acted predominantly as a conduit.

Mr. Pedigo said he wanted to highlight the Lynchburg EDA's ability to fill in funding gaps and support riskier investments.

Ms. Kilroy said that the EDA had served primarily as a conduit, but they had recently expressed interest in exercising more of their special powers.

Mr. Pedigo emphasized the committee structure of the Lynchburg EDA, and he suggested that the EDA consider a similar approach.

Mr. Storm noted the need to compete on the international scale, citing the success of AstraZeneca as an example.

Mr. Pedigo proposed a framework for the EDA to consider when making investment decisions, emphasizing the need for strategic alignment, catalytic value, and return on economic impact. He outlined three criteria: strategic alignment with the County's strategic plan; the potential for transformational impact; a clear return on economic investment; and an independent role for the EDA.

Mr. Long suggested that the EDA focus on smaller, project-based funding that can be strategically aligned with the County's goals. He noted that the County's existing funds were constrained, but the EDA could explore alternative funding sources and ways to recoup investment.

Mr. Friedman said that the EDA could serve as a catalyst for collaboration and problem-solving, even though it may not have the resources to address the problem itself.

Mr. Storm expressed a desire to be proactive in identifying and pursuing redevelopment opportunities.

Ms. Kilroy proposed a pilot effort to test the EDA's interest in supporting a project that might not have a direct return on investment. She suggested that the EDA could work with engineering resources to analyze potential site opportunities in the County, and then develop a plan to engage with property owners to position those sites competitively.

Mr. Storm said the suggestion reminded him of the concept of land banking and the potential for using special powers to acquire and hold land.

Mr. Friedman said he thought Ms. Kilroy's suggestion was good.

Mr. Hood discussed the potential impact of AstraZeneca's presence in the County. He noted the significant economic benefits it could bring, but also acknowledged the need for more detailed analysis and planning to prepare for the influx of new people, businesses, and tax base. He said that a separate committee to address these considerations would be beneficial.

Mr. Cox said that emphasizing the positives of investment in the area was important.

Mr. Pedigo said that in terms of next steps, he proposed drafting a framework for the EDA's investment decisions. He said that after that, they could start reviewing proposals under the framework that aligned with the strategic plan.

4. Adjourn

Chair Long adjourned the meeting at 5:48 p.m. The next meeting is February 17th, 2026 in Room 241.

Teste: _____
Don Long, Chair

Approved: _____
Emily Kilroy, Assistant Secretary