

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
Economic Vitality Commission**

6:00 PM  
April 17, 2024

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th  
Ave. NW, Issaquah

**MINUTES**

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

Chris Reichley, Chair  
Ashwin Muthuvenkataraman, Vice  
Chair  
Thomas Brown- virtual  
Jennifer Larson  
Joan Probala- absent  
Kymberly Lee  
Christy Garrard  
Landon Halverson – virtual, joined  
at 6:40 p.m. departed at 7:45

*Administration/Staff:*

Jen Davis Hayes, Economic  
Development Manager  
Farel Otieno, Economic  
Development Coordinator  
Juliana da Cruz, Economic  
Development Coordinator

Art Freas, Alternate – excused  
absence  
Nicoleta Mocanu, Alternate  
Anuradha Tadepalli, Alternate

**CALL TO ORDER**

REICHLEY called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a) Minutes of March 13, 2024

The minutes were approved as read. Commissioner Garrard motioned and  
Commissioner Muthuvenkataraman seconded the motion.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**AGENDA ITEMS**

a) **Quarterly Data Discussion (D)**

*Presented by:*

*Farel Otieno, Economic Development Coordinator*

The Commission discussed the Economic Development Dashboard and how the most recent year's data is displayed. The Commission suggested reducing the number of years displayed and increasing the size of the chart so that the lag in the data does not skew the trend of the chart. The Commission discussed some of the other data points in the dashboard and the sources of that data. The Commission inquired about the decline in jobs between 2022 and 2023. The Commission reviewed the I-90 corridor vacancy rates and noted the large spike in late 2023 as the context for Issaquah's data. The Commission also reviewed data related to the Economic Development Action Plan. The Commission asked to sort the new business license list by NAIC code to identify creative and outdoor recreation businesses. The Commission asked for a different format on the businesses served data chart to better clarify the makeup of the 37 BRE visits made in Q1. The Commission suggested that the Startup425 workshops be recorded and be made available online.

For future quarterly data discussions, all data should be sent in the packet, but the discussion in the meeting should focus on the data that can be impacted by the actions in the EDAP.

b) **2024 Business Survey (I)**

*Presented by:*

*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic Development Manager*

Jen Davis Hayes provided an update on the 2024 Business Survey: 91 responses so far, goal is 300+. This year's survey is online only except by request (paper surveys not mailed). Jen Davis Hayes asked for Commissioners' assistance in going door to door with survey flyers to business parks, sending personal emails to business connections, and spreading the word online. Farel will coordinate outreach.

c) **Issaquah's Performing Arts Center Alignment Letter (A)**

*Presented by:*

*Commissioner Christy Garrard*

The purpose of this letter is to call Issaquah School Board to come to the table to discuss the issue of the availability of the performance space. Christy posed the question to the Chair about

Commissioner Garrard made the motion that the Economic Vitality Commission endorse this letter of Assets of Mutual Interest for the Performing Arts Center. Commissioner Anu Tadepalli seconded. Discussion: Commissioner Lee proposed that the Economic Vitality Commission consider writing a new letter in support from the perspective of the Economic Vitality Commission. Commissioner Tom Brown suggested

that the organizer of the letter consider contacting the Booster Club for the high school. Commissioner Lee revised the motion to endorse the existing letter from Issaquah Arts and draft a second letter specifically from the Economic Vitality Commission in support. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Garrard. The vote was unanimous in support of writing an additional letter and signing on the existing letter. Commissioner Garrard will take the lead on drafting the letter.

## REPORTS

### a) **Industry Trends, Business Openings & Closures (D)**

*Presented by:*

*All Commissioners*

Commissioner Lee informed the Commission of the Issaquah History Museum's consideration of bringing the Issaquah Valley trolley back into service.

Sharetea on Gilman closed, a new boba tea place will take its place. Sola Salons had grand opening.

Commissioner Garrard shared some upcoming events

### b) **Economic Development Action Plan Update (I)**

*Presented by:*

*Economic Development Staff*

Commissioner Lee inquired about the status of Pioneer Program and MFTE and an update on affordable housing. Jen Davis Hayes said that the program would start mid-year, May 6 is when Council will consider adoption of MFTE. The other development pieces impacting feasibility will begin mid-year. Commissioner Lee flagged that the Commission would like to have a follow up conversation about housing affordability when the time is right after this information.

### c) **City Council Report Out (I)**

*Presented by:*

*Farel Otieno, Economic Development Coordinator*

None.

### d) **2024 Schedule (I)**

*Presented by:*

*Chris Reichley, Chair*

The Commission reviewed the schedule.

## **OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Thank You to Departing Commissioners (I)**

*Presented by:*

*All Commissioners*

Four commissioners are departing: Commissioner Probala, Commissioner Freas, Commissioner Muthuvenkataraman, and Commissioner Brown. Thank you to our departing commissioners who have served for many years!

We have five commissioners coming on board: Commissioner Tadepalli and Commissioner Mocanu are becoming regular members beginning in May. We have new commissioners joining us with small business/restaurant experience, economic development experience, technology and property management. We had a very strong candidate pool this year. Chair Reichley thanked the commissioners for their service and dedication.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM.

The next meeting is currently scheduled for May 15, 2024.

## **INQUIRIES**

Please contact Jen Davis Hayes at (425) 837-3414 or [jenh@issaquahwa.gov](mailto:jenh@issaquahwa.gov).

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*Note: Times listed for meetings topics are approximate and items are subject to change.*

*(A) Action, (D) Discussion, (I) Information*