

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
Economic Vitality Commission**

6:00 PM  
December 18, 2024

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th Ave.  
NW, Issaquah

**MINUTES**

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

Chris Reichley, Chair  
Anuradha Tadepalli, Vice Chair (virtual)  
Shalini Bansal  
Christy Garrard (excused absence)  
Landon Halvorson (unexcused absence)  
Kymberly Lee  
Jennifer Larson  
Nicoleta Mocanu  
Barb Pexa

*Administration/Staff:*

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

Adam Levensohn, Alternate (excused  
absence)  
Jake Magill, Alternate (virtual)  
Kelly Richardson, Alternate

**CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIR REICHLEY called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

CHAIR REICHLEY called up RICHARDSON and MAGILL to serve as regular members for the December 18, 2024 meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) October 16, 2024 Minutes

The minutes were approved as read.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Don Schultz with PACE Equity was present, he introduced himself and noted that he heard about the EVC through RICHARDSON.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**2025 Work Plan (D)**

Presented by:

*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic & Housing Development Manager  
Juliana da Cruz, Economic Development Coordinator*

Economic Development staff gave an overview of the anticipated workplan for 2025, given the reduction in staffing and the continued alignment around the Economic Development Action

Plan. The Commission asked questions about the ED team's anticipated workplan items and inquired about opportunities to support staff in these items. RICHARDSON noted that business recruitment should be a key goal of the outdoor recreation- attracting those outdoor recreation brands can come in tandem with tourism branding goals. BANSAL concurred that business attraction for outdoor recreation businesses should be a key goal. PEXA noted she is willing to support with the marketing capacity workplan item.

The Commission considered the standing committees for the Commission and decided that additional standing committees be initiated as projects arise—new project assistance could be an additional standing committee, for example. Tentative 2025 standing committees are: BRE, IHIP, Commercial Space (set to wrap in early 2025). New project assistance, data, and business attraction subcommittees will be considered as needs arise.

### **2024 EVC Annual Report + 2025 Workplan Ideas (D)**

*Presented by:*

*Chris Reichley, Chair*

LARSON agreed to assist CHAIR REICHLEY with the report to City Council.

For work planning for EVC for 2025, CHAIR REICHLEY suggested meeting topics of light rail planning, I-90 Crossing, Central Issaquah Subarea Plan. TADEPALLI suggested business resiliency and emergency management. Since the ED anticipates relying on our partners to achieve our EDAP goals, TADEPALLI also suggested having our partners come to the EVC to report out on their successes. ED Staff noted that Arts Commission was interested in having a joint meeting to discuss Creative District recertification, the potential mural program, and creative industry workforce development goals. LEE noted that hearing from development community in a panel would be helpful to understand more about affordable housing because from the business survey we heard that a lot of employees must commute very far, which is a workforce challenge. LARSON noted that transportation should be a topic in 2025, including MetroFlex to understand ridership and how it pertains to workforce transportation. MAGILL suggested talking to nearby cities Economic Vitality Commissions and what topics they are focusing on and if there are opportunities to collaborate.

### **Change of By-Laws regarding Chair and Vice-Chair Elections (A)**

*Presented by:*

*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic & Housing Development Manager*

LEE introduced the potential By-laws changes to the timing of Committee officer elections to later so that the Commission can get to know their colleagues before electing a Chair and Vice Chair.

PEXA recommended that the April meeting could be a good time for officer elections because the new commission begins in May but new members have so much to absorb that it's unlikely that they will have a strong opinion on officer positions.

MAGILL suggested that the December meeting might be a good time for officer elections because then the new Chair could help shape the new workplan for the following year.

RICHARDSON moved to make the amendments to the Commission By-laws to change the officer elections to December, beginning in December 2025. LEE seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion. In January 2025, the Commission will nominate officers for the 2025 year.

## **OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **REPORTS**

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

*Presented by:*

*All Commissioners*

Flavor of India has done a branding and menu change to Highlands Bistro. They seem to be doing well since the transition.

Coho Café is closing and becoming an Indian Restaurant. Coho cited increasing costs of labor and food and inflation squeezing the demand for dining out.

Dan Gui Cuisine's signage is up in the former Krawbar space.

In February a pottery studio going into 1445 Mall- NW Pottery Collective.

Facet Modern Mercantile opened in Gilman Village- same owner as Citrine.

Planet Fitness opening this month.

Smaller footprints are still popular for office space.

b) **Commercial Space Displacement Committee (D)**

*Presented by:*

*Committee Members*

LEE reported out on the Committee's learnings from Redmond. The City of Redmond has spent a long time considering long-term commercial impacts given growth and density. Redmond put new policies in place to incentivize putting more commercial spaces on the ground floor of buildings, but there's no data yet on the success of these policies because it is too soon.

RICHARDSON reported out on the Committee's learnings from Ellen Mohl. Ellen encouraged the Committee to look at the developer's pro formas to evaluate the challenges of making a profit when developing land. Cost of construction is key barrier to development, committee should consider ways to reduce construction cost. Ellen suggested that the Committee consider other locations that have a higher cost per square foot for development and what's working for them. Ellen suggested that a developer and a city could work together to develop the ground floor commercial space so that the space is more developed from the beginning with a particular business in mind instead of developing a shell of a space that then requires extensive and expensive tenant improvement—economies of scale.

The Commercial Space Displacement Committee will meet more to discuss in February after learning from different speakers and will return to the Economic Vitality Commission with a full report in 2025.

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

*Presented by:*

*Economic Development Staff*

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

>[View 2025-2026 Proposed Budget website](#)

Budget passed, Strategic Plan passed, Comprehensive Plan passed. MetroFlex was included in the budget, staff layoffs, there were some nonprofit contributions reduced. Also the Council passed a waiver or deferral of permit fees if impacted by the windstorm and low-income.

There is also a vacancy on Council with Councilmember Hunt moving to the State Legislature. Recruitment is open now until January 27.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

The next meeting is currently scheduled for January 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*