

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH**  
**Economic Vitality Commission**

6:00 PM  
 February 19, 2025

**MINUTES**

Tibbetts Manor, 750 17th Ave.  
 NW, Issaquah

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

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

*Administration/Staff:*

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

Adam Levensohn, Alternate – excused  
 absence  
 Jake Magill, Alternate – moved to regular  
 member for this meeting  
 Kelly Richardson, Alternate – moved to  
 regular member for this meeting

**CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIR REICHLEY called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of Jan 15, 2025

MAGILL moved to approve the minutes. LARSON seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as provided.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The Economic Development team announced that Juliana da Cruz is leaving the City of Issaquah and the City is hiring for this position.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- a) **Business Resiliency**

*Presented by:*

*Jared Schneider, Emergency Manager*

Jared Schneider provided an overview of the November “Bomb” Cyclone – 7 day outage as a result of 65 mile an hour winds in an unusual direction. The bulk of the City operation response was clearing and establishing roads, responding to emergency calls, providing human services wellness checks. One major accomplishment was the City’s standing up of “resilience hubs”

which were public facilities that were bases for residents to receive services and supplies. This strategy is one that the City hopes to continue in future emergencies. 1600 people attended a resilience hub over the course of the emergency. There is a potential collaboration point between businesses and resilience hubs. For example, we heard that many restaurants lost their food inventory. Would there be a way for businesses to contribute this food inventory to a resilience hub to prevent spoilage, and to have it be a charitable contribution.

The City conducted a community Rapid Impact Survey – windshield survey, which revealed a lot of private property damage. The City was also concerned about flooding incidents due to logjams (and trees down in creeks) in the creek.

The City estimated cost on the emergency was \$4.2 million and is hoping to get 75% reimbursement from FEMA if it is declared an emergency by the President.

The City did an after action report that identified areas of improvement, which have been incorporated in an action plan to ensure that Issaquah is increasingly ready for emergencies.

The City is thinking about preparing businesses for the next disaster: how do you maintain the critical systems for your business? IT and data security is a large component of this; preparing for redundancy. The Commission reviewed a Business Continuity Template to help businesses get prepared for a disaster. This template is meant to get businesses to start thinking about how they would respond in the case of different emergencies. It is important to have these plans written down because if something happened to the business owner, the plans are written down for others to implement.

The Commission noted that it could be helpful to have some contact and resources written into the end of the plan (example: contacts for your utility provider, contact for City resources, generator fuel suppliers etc). The Commission expressed interest in having an emergency response planning workshop for small businesses so that they can come work on their plans together, ask questions, and network and share ideas. If possible, it could be combined with the Small Business Open House on March 18. If not, a vendor fair meeting could be a good option to have businesses share their plans, develop their emergency plans, and learn more emergency information.

b) **Vice-Chair Election**

*Presented by:*

*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic & Housing Development Manager*

Though our rules do not explicitly prohibit alternates from serving as a Chair or Vice-Chair, practice has been to not allow

CHAIR REICHLEY opened nominations for Vice Chair position.

TADEPALLI was nominated for Vice Chair

LARSON nominated LEE for Vice Chair.

Nominations were closed. LEE provided brief statements about her interest in serving as a Vice-Chair. LEE abstained from voting. LEE was voted in as the Vice-Chair of the Economic Vitality Commission effective immediately.

c) **Business Survey Data**

*Presented by:*

*Sonakshi Lnu, Bellevue College Student*

*Divya Airan, Bellevue College Student*

The goal of the project was to review the Business Survey data to identify the growth opportunities and challenges that Issaquah businesses face. The students focused on woman-owned, minority-owned, home-based and LGTBQ-owned businesses, with four key business types: professional services, retail, arts and creative, and healthcare. A majority of these businesses have been in business for more than 10 years or have been in business 1-5 years. Over 50% of businesses surveyed are running the business by themselves. Healthcare and professional service businesses saw stable profit patterns whereas creative industries and

retail industries saw fluctuating profit trends. A key challenge for businesses trying to hire is difficulty paying competitive wages. There was a mixed impact across businesses in terms of comparing business success pre- and post-pandemic. The data analysis indicated that woman-owned faced challenges in accessing technical assistance and growth opportunities. Home-based businesses struggle with visibility. Woman-owned businesses expressed a higher need for mentorship and networking opportunities. Home-based businesses expressed a need for support in digital marketing. The students recommended developing specific programs to support woman-owned, minority-owned, and LGBTQ+-owned businesses. This may include tailored technical assistance for the unique needs of these businesses.

## REPORTS

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

*Presented by:*

*All Commissioners*

Four ribbon cuttings in the past two weeks: Barnes and Nobles; NW Pottery Collective, Mayuri International Foods, Planet Fitness. Also opening this Saturday is Good Lazy Donuts. Nick's Magnificent Playground opening March 1. Wild Birds Unlimited opening soon in the QFC shopping center. Pier 88 Seafood coming near Happy Lemon Bubble Tea next to Felix & Fido. A ramen business expanding to Issaquah but not sure where yet. Still unable to share what's replacing Ross in Issaquah. Jojo's Coffee & Café will replace Subway on Front Street.

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

*Presented by:*

*Economic Development Staff*

Homegrown Retail applications are live now until 2/28. We already have 22 applications and will select a cohort of 8. REICHLEY and RICHARDSON volunteered to join the selection committee.

The REI event in January was a great success—really robust panel about entrepreneurship and networking.

On Monday, February 24, we are hosting a networking walk around Issaquah.

Spring Business Open House will be on March 18 and coworking will follow.

Some products will be on pause until Juliana's position is backfilled.

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

*Presented by:*

*Jen Davis Hayes, Economic & Housing Development Manager*

Economic Development is providing an annual report to the City Council on Monday, February 24.

On the same night, the Inclusive Housing Investment Pool application will be on the consent agenda for the Council to approve, along with other funding from ARCH to preserve low-income housing.

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

*Presented by:*

*Chris Reichley, Chair*

The Committee reviewed the schedule. MAGILL and LARSON are interested in doing research on other cities' EVC-type commissions or groups to understand what work they're doing.

**OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Nicoleta, Adam, and Christy have resigned from the Economic Vitality Commission, so we are actively recruiting for more members of the EVC. Applications are open now, help us spread the word! Chris and Kym will be on the interview panel, Jennifer will be a backup commissioner on the interview panel.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

The next meeting is currently scheduled for March 19, 2025.

**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*