MINUTES – November 18, 2025

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economic Development Council held in the
Indian River County Administration Building B
Conference Room B1-501
1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL at
3:30 PM on Tuesday, November 18, 2025

23 Members / 12 Quorum

1. Call to Order

Stevie Ray Stark, Vice Chair, called the November 18, 2025, meeting of the Indian River County Economic Development Council to order at 3:30 PM.

2. Roll Call

Members Present

Aaron Vos, City of Vero Beach
James Raphalian, Town of Orchid
Britney Melchiori, Sebastian Chamber of Commerce
Danny Markford, Local Manufacturing Industry Rep.
Joe Idlette, III, Gifford Community
J. Rock Tonkel, BCC Appointee
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian
Peter Robinson, Local Developer
Sam Carroll, Jr., Town of Indian River Shores
Peggy Jones, Indian River County School Board
Tracey McMorris, Career Source
Lee Hunter, Tourist Industry, Vice Chair
Lance Lunceford, Member at Large
Todd Howder, Member at Large
William Penney, Banking Representative
Stevie Ray Stark, Healthcare Industry, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Susan Adams – Non-Voting Commission Liaison
Peter Robinson, Local Developer
Steven DeVos, Member-at-Large

Members Absent

Jordan Lulich, Esq., Real Estate Industry, Chairman
Jessica Salgado, City of Fellsmere
Jerry Renick, Agricultural Industry
Dori Stone, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Anna Kirkland, Member at Large
Annabel Robertson, Esq., Indian River State College
Karl Zimmerman, Member at Large

John Dyer, Local Industry Representative
Brian Bauer, Workforce Development
Annabel Robertson, Esq., Indian River State College
Jacob Folcik, Agriculture Industry Rep.
Danny Markford, Local Manufacturing Industry Rep.

***QUORUM* – The minimum quorum requirements was met.**

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of the Minutes from the July 15, 2025, Meeting

Lance Lunceford made a motion, seconded by J. Rock Tonkel, to approve the Minutes of the July 15, 2025, EDC Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of the Minutes from the September 16, 2025, Meeting

Peggy Jones made a motion, seconded by Sam Carroll, to approve the Minutes of the September 16, 2025, EDC Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of 2026 Meeting Dates

Aaron Vos made a motion, seconded by Lance Lunceford, to approve the 2026 Meeting Dates. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Presentations

a. Economic Development Report

Doug Dombroski gave a county update of what the County has been working on over the last couple of months. It has been a lot of collaborative efforts, particularly working with Mark Litten at the Chamber. The Chamber and the County are always in active communication together. They've held meetings with their regional partners. Specifically, they met with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and Career Source Research Coast, because they do have other Economic Development incentives and resources for businesses interested in Indian River County. Most recently they also met with Frank Isley from the Indian River County Hospital District for an introduction and to let them know that County or the Chamber is available to assist with their efforts. Particularly there were some articles in the paper that VCOM, the College of Osteopathic Medicine was trying to locate in the district; however, VCOM was also considering moving to St. Lucie County. That was a little bit alarming, so they wanted to make sure they met with them to see if there was any role for the County or the Chamber to help there. The County and Chamber have also established a standing Committee Meeting with Vero Beach Airport and the City of Vero Beach, and those meetings have been productive. One of the results of those meetings is the Airport and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council were connected to discuss potential grant opportunities for infrastructure and terminal expansion. The Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council is the conduit to any kind of Federal EDA Grants in this region for infrastructure grants tied to economic development.

Mr. Ryan Sweeney stated there has been quite a bit of back and forth with the consultants since the last meeting with the Economic Development Council (EDC) in September. The updated draft economic development plan was circulated to all the members of the EDC. He turned the meeting over to Jeff Marcell to review the plan updates.

b. Economic Development Strategic Action Plan Update

Mr. Jeff Marcell, Senior Partner with TIP Strategies, presented an update on the Strategic Action Plan with a PowerPoint presentation. He thanked the Members of the Board, as the project has been proceeding on for several months and the Board has been involved every step of the way. TIP really appreciated all their input. The dialogue that they had at the last EDC meeting in September was a great conversation. It was exactly the kind of information that they were looking for, with all the input and feedback. They have taken all those comments that were shared at the meeting, and they've done everything that they could to make sure to incorporate those comments. They've worked closely with the team in the County to go back and forth and to make sure to refine the things that they heard from the members of the EDC. The revised plan is a better plan than the draft plan that they shared in September. He really appreciated all the feedback.

Mr. Marcell gave a quick overview of the planning process to provide a reminder about what they're doing, and why we're all here. He made points about the revised action plan and the goal for the current meeting. Today's objectives are two-fold. First, they are seeking the EDC's approval today, to move to the second objective of preparing for a County Commission presentation on January 27th.

The project goal is a ten-year Economic Development Strategic Action Plan for the economic development activities of the County. It has all been about enhancing growth, attracting investments, retaining businesses, and fostering employment opportunities throughout Indian River County.

Mr. Marcell reviewed the stakeholder engagement process. TIP and the County had a real commitment to stakeholder engagement as a part of this project, with over 150 participants at public workshops, and several roundtable discussions. He wanted to update the Board of one addition to that stakeholder engagement. During their last meeting in September, Commissioner Moss encouraged TIP to reach out to Andrea Lazzari, Director of the University of Florida Institute of Food & Agricultural Science. She is really committed to collaborating and working with the EDC to implement agricultural industry goals once the Strategic Plan is complete.

Mr. Marcell discussed the data that was pulled together as part of this project, which was previously shared in a couple of different meetings. The robust economic demographic analysis across the County was certainly part of the planning process. At the September meeting TIP presented the name for the plan "Treasured Tomorrow" which was well received by the Committee. He noted that they will be revising the ten-year timeframe (2026-2035) to reflect the adoption date.

Mr. Marcell summarized what was new to the plan, from the last presentation in September. Additional content was added and reorganized in the catalyst projects section and the EDC requested local industry examples of light manufacturing. With the assistance of County Staff there was extensive revision throughout the document, making certain that the Committee's feedback from the September meeting was incorporated.

Mr. Lunceford stated that he thought the revised document was much improved from the previous draft and he thanked TIP Strategies for their efforts. Mr. Robinson stated that he agreed with Mr. Lunceford's assessment.

Mr. Marcell reminded the Committee that the plan itself is broken into three different goal areas. Gole 1 is focused on targeted industry development. These are the focused efforts on existing and perspective target industry businesses. Goal 2 is the list of catalytic projects the County will undertake. These are the projects that if completed would be of economic significance to the entire County. Goal 3 is County resources and services that are the functions and activities that the County already has in place or could implement in the future, to spark economic activity.

In Goal 1- *Targeted Industry Development*, targeted industries were identified by all the data analyses that they completed, but also by a lot of internal conversations that they had. They were defining the targeted industry by looking at high wage opportunities, with industry jobs that provide a living wage. A change was made so that building trades sector was represented in some capacity because it was not specifically identified as a target industry. In the opening paragraph of this section, they made some additions to make sure to reference the importance of the building trades to Indian River County.

Mr. Marcell stated that under Aerospace and Manufacturing 1.1. category, it was recommended that different examples of light manufacturing in Indian River County were cited, so that people could understand what light manufacturing would look like. TIP identified a few examples that they have now incorporated into that section of the plan. Hybrid Sources Incorporated is a company involved in the semi-conductor industry. Whelen Aerospace Technologies manufactures lighting for the aviation industry and Nylacarb is a plastics injection molding company. Changes were also made in the Agriculture and Aquaculture 1.3 category. Commissioner Moss made some comments about making sure to reflect the phrase “Farm to Table.” They had been calling it “Microfarms”, but Farm to Table is a more appropriate term. In addition there was a change where the plan had previously referenced a focus on agriculture on the west side of I-95, which is now revised to not limit agriculture west of I-95. In the Finance, Insurance and Professional Services 1.2 category and the Healthcare 1.4 category he indicated there are no changes.

Mr. Penney emphasized that there are good opportunities to attract “back office” smaller to mid-size financial companies from places like New York. He was pleased to see that it would be included in 1.2.4. These are companies that would consider relocating to Florida and they offer high wage job opportunities.

Mr. Marcell stated for Goal 2 - *Catalyst Projects*, the EDC provided detailed input at their September meeting. This section specifically is a much better result after that conversation and everybody’s input. He noted that the projects were reordered to provide emphasis on County controlled projects. Thereby, the first four projects are the Oslo Corridor, Indian River Mall, County Road 510 and 1-95/SR 60 Corridor. Catalyst project 2.5 is now representative of both regional airports in Indian River County. He had great conversations with everyone about the importance of making sure that the Vero Beach and Sebastian Airports were represented. The airport section has been adjusted to make sure that it serves both airports. Of note on 2.5.5. and 2.5.6., there is an emphasis about trying to build an aerospace cluster within the County, beyond the amazing contributions of Piper, but to really lean on Piper’s success and leverage it to attract those types of industries.

Mr. Marcell also stated that there is an addition to this section, *Local Catalyst Projects 2.6*. In the last EDC meeting we concluded that we needed to capture the projects that would create economic significance across the County but are controlled by the municipalities. The solution the EDC identified was to try to put together a list of those projects. The County team made a request for the municipalities to share project(s) that have economic significance with a brief description. The municipalities responded and the following projects were incorporated into the plan: The Point Surf Park in Fellsmere, Saltwood Mixed Use Development in Sebastian, the Highway 1 Redevelopment Opportunity in Sebastian, and the Three Corners Project in Vero Beach. This body can continue to grow this list, refine this list, and promote it as the plan moves forward. It’s about making sure that the EDC can help promote and educate the community at large about some of the great projects that are happening within municipalities. The EDC also had conversations about bringing elected officials together from the municipal level and county elected officials. Convening those elected officials to discuss economic development projects and the importance of economic development in general was added in 2.6.2.

Mr. Marcell reviewed Goal 3 - *County Resources and Services*, and he stated there are not a significant number of changes to this section. Based upon the comments offered today, TIP will make the addition about ensuring every two to three years that the County team evaluate the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan and make refinements and adjustments as needed. Since the last time they met in September, they have adjusted to 3.2.4. under the *Tax Based Diversification* section to clarify consideration for expansion of the Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) into Indian River County. A fulltime SBDC location in Indian River County would serve more small businesses in the area.

Mr. Marcel also reviewed the list of performance metrics which has been refined to include measurable elements based upon input with County staff. They had a good conversation with the team at the County about providing an implementation matrix tool to be used once the plan is approved. This matrix tool is something that staff and the Board can use to measure how this plan is being implemented over that ten-year horizon. It's a way to report out what's been taking place, and what are the time horizons for each one of the strategic areas as well. This is a ten-year plan and it's hard to predict what's going to happen next year let alone what's going to happen eight years from now. So, TIP Strategies encourages their clients to think of these plans as evergreen documents because conditions change.

Mr. Penney questioned the inclusion of a Commercial Property Clean Energy Program (C-Pace) within the incentives section encouraging a resolution for its use county-wide. He stated he is opposed to any Pace lending for any reason, whether it be for a house or business. He discussed the problems it has caused to the consumers and primary lenders/lien holders of the property.

Ms. Adams stated that the County has approved one commercial Pace loan as a site-specific approval. The County has not approved a county-wide program, but this provided an opportunity to utilize the program through a request to the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Dombroski stated that he had requested that TIP include C-Pace program in the plan, because in 2024 the Florida Legislature made substantive changes, separating the residential Pace Program from the Commercial Pace Program. He also indicated that most of the problems related to the Pace Program were related to the residential program and not the commercial program. He indicated that the C-Pace program requires that the primary lender/lien holder approve of the C-Pace loan before it can be used. If the primary lender does not approve the loan, then the C-Pace application does not go forward. The program could be a beneficial tool for a developer looking for another source of financing to include within a developer's capital stack.

Mr. Robinson stated that he thought the C-Pace program should remain in the document for future consideration, based upon the explanation that was provided by staff that the primary lien holder needs to approve the C-Pace application. He felt the EDC should not eliminate a potential economic development tool. The Committee agreed that the C-Pace Program should stay in the document; however, the document could remove the reference to a resolution authorizing its use countywide, as businesses could make a request to the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Marcell discussed the next steps with the Board. TIP is requesting EDC's approval to finalize the plan based upon the comments today. In addition, to revising the plan they will provide an executive summary and an implementation matrix for staff. TIP proposes to make a presentation to the County Commission on the 27th of January.

Mr. Sweeney shared some thoughts about what the steps are now in advance of the Commission Meeting on the 27th. Mr. Sweeney stated from a procedural perspective, he thought staff and the consultant can account for the input that's been provided today with and any additional input received. He thought that there has been enough concise feedback from the EDC that it would not be necessary to come back once the revisions have been made. Therefore, staff is requesting a formal vote to accept the comments that have been made and to move the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan forward to the Board of County Commissioners.

Peter Robinson made a motion, seconded by William Penney, to move the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan forward to the Board of County Commissioners for final consideration. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Marcell requested that when TIP presents the plan at that Commission meeting on January 27th, if any of the EDC Board members can be at the meeting to show their support, or send a letter of support, they would greatly appreciate it. From experience he knows that when these plans are in front of elected bodies it's important for elected officials to understand that the plan was not just developed by staff and consultants. The Indian River plan document was a result of community leaders coming together to provide content and input.

Mr. Sweeney stated he envisioned the Commission meeting will have a presentation by Mr. Marcell and staff, but if we can also have members of the EDC attend as a contingent to show the effort that has been put forth in completion of the plan.

Doug Dombroski added that the Chamber and the County intend in the new year to expand meetings with the City of Sebastian and Fellsmere as well. He just wanted to make sure that the EDC is aware that the County and Chamber are not just concentrating their efforts exclusively in the City of Vero Beach and the Vero Beach Airport.

4. <u>Next Meeting</u>: January 20, 2026 – 3:30 p.m.

5. <u>Adjournment</u>

Being no further business, Stevie Ray Stark, Vice Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly K. Moirano
Recording Secretary