



MINUTES – February 24, 2026
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economic Development Council (EDC) 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, February 24, 2026

23 Members / 12 Quorum

1. Call to Order

Lance Lunceford, Chair, called the February 24, 2026, 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
Joe Idlette, III, Gifford Community
J. Rock Tonkel, BOCC Appointee
Peter Robinson, Local Developer
Peggy Jones, Indian River County School Board
Tracey McMorris, Career Source
Lance Lunceford, Member at Large
Todd Howder, Member at Large
Stevie Ray Stark, Healthcare Industry, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Susan Adams – Non-Voting Commission Liaison
Peter Robinson, Local Developer
Steven DeVos, Member-at-Large
Jessica Salgado, City of Fellsmere
Brian Bauer, Workforce Development
Jacob Folcik, Agriculture Industry Rep.
James Raphalian, Town of Orchid
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian
Lee Hunter, Tourist Industry

Members Absent

Danny Markford, Local Manufacturing Industry Rep.
Andrea Beam, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Annabel Robertson, Esq., Indian River State College
John Dyer, Local Industry Representative
Britney Melchiori, Sebastian Chamber of Commerce
Sam Carroll, Jr., Town of Indian River Shores
William Penney, Banking Representative

QUORUM – The minimum quorum requirements was met.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Approval of the Minutes from the January 20, 2026, Meeting

Peggy Jones made a motion, seconded by Aaron Vos, to approve the Minutes of the January 20, 2026, EDC Meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentations

- a. Indian River County Chamber of Commerce Report

Mr. Lunceford stated he received a notice that Andrea Beam, President of the Indian River County Chamber was not going to be able to attend due to illness. Keith Kite, Chair of the Government Economic Development stated they're basically underway in the process of pursuing a new Economic Development Director. They have interviews this week and if that goes well, they will be meeting with Doug Dombroski and John Stoll over Community Development to continue that process. Mr. Lunceford asked if there were any surprises in the 2025 Target Industry Report that were kind of unexpected. Mr. Kite stated they're very supportive of that document. They spent a year and a half on it. There were a lot of different people throughout the business community that were involved. They are 100% in agreement with the direction of the economic development report. It also lined up with Florida Commerce's new target industry list that just came out this year, perhaps Lance is going to share that with the EDC. It lines up with our Agrisciences, our healthcare, aviation and our marine industries across the board.

- b. Dan Richey – February Cold Freeze & Agricultural Industry Status

Dan Richey discussed the status of the agricultural industry and the cold freeze that had happened which many people and businesses were affected. He was the Chair of the Florida Citrus Commission, currently on the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee as the U.S. Trade Representative. He served on the EDC, the Planning & Zoning Commission and is the CEO of Riverfront Packing. It's remarkable how quickly it changed for a lot of reasons. There were 14 or 15 packing houses along U.S. 1. Now there's one which is Riverfront Packing at 49th Street. They're struggling to hang on. It's a very difficult financial time, barring the freeze. The way things have changed here it started back with citrus canker. They were eliminating citrus canker by burning every tree 1900 feet from a pencil point size canker lesion on a leaf. Within a 1900-foot radius pushed and burned every tree. They had almost burned their own industry down at that point, but that was the science that we had for that time to get rid of the disease. It didn't work and they ended up abandoning the process after the Hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 spread the disease. It's a bacteria spread by wind driven rain so clearly a hurricane spread it throughout the entire state, and they declared an endemic. Along with Canker the Hurricanes of '04 and '05 which were devastating to the citrus industry. Those things caused economic changes that shifted the citrus landscape here. It was all citrus groves inside of I-95. Now, there are no citrus groves inside of I-95 and there are less groves west of I-95 as hedge funds and venture capital firms have bought up a lot of that land. The investors realized the hard way that there is nothing you can grow up there. There is not a lot of economic viability for agriculture out there because it's sandy soil. Citrus will grow in it but not much else will. Where they were once a driving force in the economy, they are no longer that and they recognize that. They had 240,000,000 boxes of oranges in the state at one time, a box of oranges weighing 90 pounds. Today they have about 13,000,000. They used to have 60,000,000 boxes of grapefruit but today they have 1.4 million boxes of grapefruit. The industry and consumer preferences have changed. Mr. Richey stated that the industry here is at risk for a lot of different reasons, not just the greening disease. Mr. Richey stated there will be an industry here that will prevail, but it will not be anywhere near what it was. Imports have killed them this year because of the tariff threats in South Africa. The economics of growing anything in this country are

getting challenging, because they are being priced out of the game. Low-cost providers have taken over and, there has been a geopolitical shift because of China. China is opening the doors to our Southern Hemisphere to flood this market with products. They do not have to go through the typical vetting process any longer to make sure invasive pest diseases don't come in with their product because they want to accelerate that.

Riverfront Packing is going to continue to try to stay in the game the best they can by being frugal and trying to figure out ways to reduce their costs, because they've hit the ceiling on what they can charge for their fruit because of the competitive environment of imports.

c. Planning and Development Services Economic Development Report

Doug Dombroski stated at the last EDC meeting the Board Members provided the recommendation for the Board of County Commissioners to authorize revisions to the Local Jobs Grant Program. Today the BOCC did provide that authorization. So, at the March 17th meeting Agenda the EDC will have some pretty in-depth discussions regarding proposed revisions to the Local Jobs Grant Program. Also, on the March 17th agenda, there will be a short presentation from the Vero Beach Airport to provide everybody with an update on what's going on in terms of projects and expansion.

d. Presentation – Oslo Corridor Discussion

Logan Woody provided a presentation on the Oslo Corridor. Ultimately what they wanted to put to a vote and discussion from this Council is to reaffirm the strategies that were already contained within the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan regarding the Oslo overlay area and corridor. The second would be to obtain the Board's support for an Economic Development and Special District for this corridor. The Oslo Corridor Project has been going on since 2000 when this new interchange was identified, and it was added to the FDOT priority list. It was then later included in the County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in 2010. Within this Comprehensive Plan it was noted that it would be worthy for staff to revisit this Corridor to assess whether any changes to the Commercial Node were needed and evaluate what the Economic Development Incentives might be for this area, with a new entry and entrance way to the County. Fast forward nearly 25 years, FDOT finally began the construction of this interchange. In February of 2024, the County conducted an Urban Service Boundary study. This USB study looked at the entire County not just the Oslo area. Of the many recommendations that came from these consultants one of which was for Staff to conduct a study on the Oslo area to look at expansion and connection of the Urban Service Boundary along Oslo Road in conjunction with this new interchange. The Planning Staff initiated this Corridor Study in late 2024. They went through the first phase of this project that had to deal with the feasibility of Urban Service Boundary connection, public outreach through 2025. In 2025 staff provided a presentation where the Board of County Commissioners enacted a one-year temporary moratorium on rezonings. We're now in Phase II which involves additional public engagement and outreach to property owners and other stakeholders. The goal is for a final adoption proposed overlay district and land development regulations to the Board of County Commissioners later this year.

This kind of breaks up the Phase I and II over the past couple of years. What marked the end of Phase I was the formal recommendation report to the Board and that included, the Urban Service Boundary connection along Oslo Road, a one-year temporary moratorium, and for staff to develop an overlay district.

In Phase 2 the Planning and Development Services' goal will be to deliver recommendations for Comprehensive Plan Amendments. These will include changes to the Oslo area's future land use, and Oslo Overlay District regulations. They will also be considering the adoption of certain Economic Development Incentives. The Oslo Overlay District is part of what will be developed with this Oslo Project, and the Oslo Overlay is a great planning tool that allows the County to add additional architectural standards, design and landscaping requirements for a particular area. The main reason for showing those 3 components together is to also help everyone understand the path that Planning is

currently taking for this project. The proposal is to modify the future land use of this corridor. This would not change any zoning within this area, and it wouldn't affect how properties are currently being used. Instead, the planned purpose for changing the future land use is to cause the least amount of disruption to current property owners. Any changes that staff may propose to our Future Land Use will not affect how these properties are currently zoned now. It would still require the property owner to initiate a rezoning of their property in line with the Future Land Use adopted by the BOCC.

Property owners that are utilizing their property for bona fide AG operations and taking advantage of those tax incentives may continue to do that. In the same light, properties that utilize their property for commercial use may continue to do that as well. This gives the property owner the most amount of say in what they would like to ultimately do with their individual land and that's the main objective behind the modifications to Future Land Use, with no proposed modifications to the current zoning of the property. Why the overlay is important is because Oslo will be the new entrance into Indian River County and it's important that we design it in a very graceful and visually appealing way. So, the overlay allows us to set additional development standards and regulations that might not exist elsewhere in the county, but we can make those a requirement in this area to assure that there's a level of growing with grace in this new entry and exit way.

The next tool that we have for the Planning Department is a county-initiated beautification project and this is something that is outside of the scope of recommendation that was made at the May 20th, 2025, Board of County Commission meeting. Instead, this would be a separate task that we would undertake, through the County's tree mitigation fund. The funding is collected from developers, who remove native trees on their property. The objective of this fund is for Indian River County to then go back and replant native vegetation in other areas of the county. Right now, there's a relatively large amount of funding available to beautify certain areas of the County. It is currently proposed that we use some of these funds for the beautification of the Oslo corridor, as a way to kind of kick start the overlay and development standards of this area.

Mr. Dombroski thought it was important to understand how the goals that the planning side of the Department are working on the Urban Service Boundary and overlay zone. What we're considering in terms of economic development in the Oslo district is the creation of a special district particular to economic development. The district would utilize tax increment financing (TIF) within the district. In other words, you would establish a boundary in the Oslo corridor where funds could be spent. These are not additional taxes paid by the property owners. The tax increment would be funding from new taxes that are generated in the district primarily from new development. Those funds would be segregated into a trust fund to stay in the district. So, the dependent special district would be an agency of the County, and the Board of County Commissioners can be the board members of that agency. The County would be required to have an economic development plan for the district, whereby the plan would outline how funding will be spent for public capital projects and private economic development incentives. The existing tax base would still go into the County's general fund. How this works is any future increases after you establish the baseline goes into a trust fund for use within the district. Florida statutes provide counties with certain economic development powers in Chapter 125 and a tax income tax increment trust fund can be established in Chapter 200. After the district is created, property values increase over time. So the baseline property values would continue to go into the County General Fund but any increase in taxable value then would be captured within the TIF district and that could be utilized for both public improvements and private incentives. During the Oslo corridor workshops, they asked people how they would like public resources spent within the district and to provide their feedback for the following options, transportation improvements, public infrastructure, land acquisition for public space, and beautification. Staff will be able to provide that information to the Board of County Commissioners as we go forward and consider this as a tool for economic development and community development. He thought it was important to emphasize that we're not talking about any new taxes within the district. It's just a way to segregate out those new investments that are coming into the district to utilize those funds to make improvements within the corridor.

Mr. Dombroski reviewed the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan strategies for the

Oslo Corridor catalyst project in Goal 2 of the Plan. He also pointed out Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan talks about County resources and services. Goal 2 recommends that the County look for new programs for Economic Development to help these catalyst projects.

Aaron Vos made a motion, seconded by Todd Howder, for a Motion to reaffirm the Economic Development Council's Strategic Action Plan.

The motion passed unanimously.

Peter Robinson made a motion, seconded by Peggy Jones, for a Motion to create an Economic Development Special District for the Oslo Corridor.

The motion passed unanimously.

e. Chairman Matters

Mr. Lunsford stated one of the things that he has received from members of the public is the importance of workforce development. One of the things he wanted to discuss was whether or not the Council wanted to have a special meeting just on Workforce Development to hear from various groups in the community and University College groups. This Council may want to hear from on various programs on Workforce Development. It will be placed on the agenda as an agenda item. He scheduled a Special Call Meeting on April 21st at 3:30 p.m. in Building B1-501 on workforce development.

Since it's early in the year, he thought it was a good time to talk about if we want to have any joint meetings or special meetings given the fact that we have passed the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan today from the Board of County Commissioners. He asked if there would be interest sometime in 2026 in having a joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners to discuss everything from EDSAP and all the various incentives that we want to look at. His desired outcome from that meeting is to review the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan and align what the Commission wants to see done on that.

He thought it would be good at the beginning of the meeting just go around to all the Board Members and give 30 seconds to 1-minute updates on what's happening in everyone's industries. Members at large talk about what's happening across the community and Government officials talk about what's happening in the Governments to give a quick update.

f. Council Member Updates

Mr. Andrew Vos stated that Vero Beach was rated as the safest city in Florida and reflects on the County as a whole.

Ms. Peggy Jones stated the school district held a summit last week called "Wired to Learn" which had about 360 people there. 31 states and 17 school districts came. It was a great presentation. It was a school district in alignment with the Learning Alliance.

Mr. Brian Bauer stated they recently had a job fair in Fort Pierce. It was a regional job fair. It was their 11th annual and they saw over 1,000 candidates come through the job fair. That number has never been seen before. They usually average 500 candidates.

5. Next Meeting: Special Call Meeting March 17, 2026 – 3:30 p.m.

6. Adjournment

Being no further business, Lance Lunceford, Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly K. Moirano
Recording Secretary