



MINUTES – March 17, 2026
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economic Development Council (EDC) Regular Meeting 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, March 17, 2026

23 Members / 12 Quorum

1. Call to Order

Lance Lunceford, Chair, called the March 17, 2026, meeting of the Indian River County Economic Development Council to order at 3:31 PM.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

b. Roll Call

A roll call was conducted, and a quorum was confirmed.

Members Present

Aaron Vos, City of Vero Beach
J. Rock Tonkel, BOCC Appointee
Peter Robinson, Local Developer
Peggy Jones, Indian River County School Board
Tracey McMorris, Career Source
Lance Lunceford, Chairman, 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, Vice Chairman, City of Fellsmere
Fred Jones, City of Sebastian
Lee Hunter, Tourist Industry
John Dyer, Local Industry Representative
William Penney, Banking Representative

Members Absent

Joe Idlette, III, Gifford Community
Danny Markford, Local Manufacturing Industry Rep.
Andrea Beam, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Annabel Robertson, Esq., Indian River State College
Britney Melchiori, Sebastian Chamber of Commerce

Sam Carroll, Jr., Town of Indian River Shores
James Raphalian, Town of Orchid
Jordan Lulich, real Estate Industry Rep.
Jacob Folcik, Agriculture Industry Rep.
Brian Bauer, Workforce Development
Todd Howder, Member at Large

QUORUM – *The minimum quorum requirements was met.*

2. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Approval of the Minutes from the February 24, 2026, Meeting

Peggy Jones made a motion, seconded by Aaron Vos, to approve the Minutes of the February 24, 2026, EDC Meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Council Reports

- a. Industry Updates

Representatives from each industry sector provided brief updates.

William Penney from the banking industry reported steady loan activity, continued strong deposit flows, and indicators of stable economic conditions.

Stevie Ray Stark from the healthcare industry noted ongoing construction projects at Cleveland Clinic Indian River, Sebastian River Medical Center, and a new pediatric and internal medicine facility on Oslo Road.

Peter Robinson from the local developers discussed concerns about bureaucratic burdens associated with establishing a new economic development district in the Oslo corridor and stressed the importance of avoiding unnecessary layers of regulation.

John Dyer from local industry reported record sales across auto groups. Concerns about high interest rates and inflation. Suggested the County consider streamlining permitting; compared slow IR County permitting (4+ months) vs. Monroe County (5 weeks).

Lee Hunter from the tourism industry reported a strong first quarter for 2026 following record performance in 2025. Increases in air travel linked to new JetBlue and American Airlines service were credited for higher occupancy and revenue performance across all hotel tiers.

b. Community Updates

Jacob Fojtik from the agriculture community reported on local conditions, including recovery efforts following the recent freeze. Citrus operations reported no fruit loss but acknowledged significant impacts to nursery stock, estimating four to five months of recovery.

c. Government Updates

Peggy Jones from the School Board reported continued success of the “Wired to Learn” education initiative and recognition from the State of Georgia, which plans to adopt the district’s model.

Fred Jones from the City of Sebastian highlighted the upcoming Shrimp Fest event, which is March 21-22 at Riverview Park.

Jessica Salgado from the City of Fellsmere reviewed the Legacy Landing development.

Councilman Aaron Vos reported approval of expanded parking leases at the airport and noted that a new Marriott hotel is being built adjacent to the sports complex will begin construction shortly. Preparations are also underway for Fourth of July festivities.

5. Presentations

a. Indian River County Chamber of Commerce Report

Andrea Beam, Chamber President announced the hiring of the new Economic Development Vice President, Brian Cartland, who brings extensive statewide experience. The Chamber is working to update its available sites database and is coordinating a public information campaign on zoning, density, and incentive processes. The Young Professionals Network will host an Oslo Road workshop on March 25.

b. Planning and Development Services Report

Doug Dombroski reviewed ongoing collaborations with the Vero Beach Airport. He is also updating the County’s economic development webpage and preparing the revised Local Jobs Grant Program Materials for EDC review.

c. Vero Beach Airport Informational Update

Brandon Dambeck, Operations Manager, presented a comprehensive overview of commercial airline performance, airport operations, and major capital improvements. He reported that Vero Beach is now the fourth busiest airport in Florida by operations. Airline load factors continue to exceed expectations, with American Airlines reporting an 88% load factor in the previous month. JetBlue and Breeze Airways continue to expand routes, including new “breeze-through” connections. Terminal renovations are underway to improve passenger flow, outdoor seating, covered walkways, and baggage handling facilities. Negotiations are ongoing with a private vendor for a lease agreement to manage the long-term paid parking lots. Major development activity includes new hangars, car rental facilities, hotel construction, and private aeronautical investment.

Mr. Dambeck also discussed infrastructure needs, permitting challenges, and funding implications tied to rising passenger counts.

c. Local Jobs Grant Program Guidelines and Program Discussion Points

Mr. Dombroski reviewed proposed changes to simplify and modernize the Local Jobs Grant Program. The Council discussed revising the grant ceiling to \$1.5 million, with a maximum annual disbursement of \$500,000, and replacing fixed-dollar incentives with a percentage-based model tied to the County's Average Annual Wage.

Consensus was reached to eliminate the program's lowest wage tier, revise qualifying job definitions, reduce reporting to once annually, shorten hiring periods to three years, streamline documentation requirements, and incorporate clearer claw back provisions subject to County Attorney review.

The Council instructed staff to incorporate the recommendations for a final presentation and a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners at the May EDC meeting.

6. Chairman Matters

Chairman Lunceford reviewed plans for the April 21, 2026, Special Called Meeting focused exclusively on workforce development. Indian River State College, School District leadership, and regional workforce organizations have confirmed participation.

He praised the Council for progress on the Jobs Grant revisions and emphasized continued commitment to attracting high-quality employees to the County.

7. Council Member Updates

No additional matters were brought forward.

8. Next Scheduled Meeting: The next scheduled meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2026.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, Lance Lunceford, Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly K. Moirano
Recording Secretary