



## **MINUTES – April 21, 2026**

### ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL***

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Minutes of the Economic Development Council (EDC) Special Call Meeting held in the  
Indian River County Administration Building B  
Conference Room B1-501  
1800 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Vero Beach, FL at  
**3:30 PM on Tuesday, April 21, 2026**

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*23 Members / 12 Quorum*

#### **1. Call to Order**

Lance Lunceford, Chair, called the April 21, 2026, meeting of the Indian River County Economic Development Council to order at 3:34 PM.

##### **a. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

##### **b. Roll Call**

#### ***Members Present***

Aaron Vos, City of Vero Beach  
J. Rock Tonkel, BOCC Appointee  
Peggy Jones, Indian River County School Board  
Lance Lunceford, Chairman, Member at Large  
Commissioner Susan Adams – Non-Voting Commission Liaison  
Jessica Salgado, Vice Chairman, City of Fellsmere  
Britney Melchiori, Sebastian Chamber of Commerce  
Sam Carroll, Jr., Town of Indian River Shores  
Andrea Beam, Indian River Chamber of Commerce  
Brian Bauer, Workforce Development (Arrived Late)

#### ***Members Absent***

Fred Jones, City of Sebastian  
Lee Hunter, Tourist Industry  
John Dyer, Local Industry Representative  
William Penney, Banking Representative Peter Robinson, Local Developer  
Steven DeVos, Member-at-Large  
Stevie Ray Stark, Healthcare Industry, Vice Chairman  
Peter Robinson, Local Developer  
Joe Idlette, III, Gifford Community  
Danny Markford, Local Manufacturing Industry Rep.  
Annabel Robertson, Esq., Indian River State College  
James Raphalian, Town of Orchid  
Jordan Lulich, real Estate Industry Rep.  
Jacob Folcik, Agriculture Industry Rep.  
Todd Howder, Member at Large

A roll call confirmed no quorum, meaning no action items could be formally approved, but all informational presentations and discussions proceeded as planned.

This Special Call Meeting was organized primarily to focus on workforce development, with an additional timely presentation on Opportunity Zones 2.0 following a request from Florida Commerce for local government input before April 30.

The Chairman removed Agenda Item 5A (Florida Council of 100 Ambition Accelerated Campaign) by consensus to ensure adequate time for the scheduled presentations.

## **2. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda**

There were none.

## **3. Approval of Minutes**

There was no quorum so the Minutes could not be approved.

## **4. Presentations**

### **a. Opportunity Zones 2.0**

Doug Dombroski, Economic Development Manager, explained the key points.

- Opportunity Zones 2.0 is a new federal iteration of the program, taking effect in 2027 and making Opportunity Zones permanent.
- Eligibility criteria have been tightened, requiring poverty rates  $\geq 20\%$  and median family income  $\leq 70\%$  of the area median.
- Enhanced rural incentives now apply, offering:
  - 30% capital gains reduction for 5-year investments in rural tracts (vs. 10% previously).
- The Governor may nominate up to 25% of eligible census tracts statewide, and 33% of these must be rural.
  - Nearly all Indian River County census tracts qualify as rural, providing a competitive advantage.
- The county intends to submit documentation supporting eligible tracts by April 30, 2026, deadline.
- Recommended census tracts include areas in Fellsmere, Gifford, Oslo Road corridor, and locations with commercial or industrial capacity.
- EDC reached consensus for the Chair to submit a letter of support for the county's recommended tracts.

## **Additional Coordination**

CareerSource Research Coast noted a new federal waiver allowing up to 90–100% reimbursement for on-the-job training wages for businesses or residents located within Opportunity Zones. Mr. Bauer indicated that he would provide the County a letter of support from Career Source Research Coast, to include in their Opportunity Zone 2.0 census tract requests to the State of Florida.

### **b. Workforce Development Presentations**

The Council heard from four major regional workforce partners:

## **1. School District of Indian River County**

**Presenter:** Superintendent Dr. David Moore

### **Highlights**

- The district has achieved historic academic growth, rising from mid-state rankings (2018–19) to among the top-performing districts in Florida.
- Significant improvements were noted across:
  - ELA, Math, Science, Civics, U.S. History, and Middle School Acceleration.
- High school acceleration -- students graduating with AP, dual enrollment, or industry certification -- rose from 64% to 85% countywide.
- Investments in teacher support, leadership development, and strategic planning contribute to strong retention and high instructional quality.
- Aerospace pathways and a renewed Piper Aircraft partnership are expanding career pipelines aligned with local industry needs.
- The district continues to improve fiscal stability, now holding AAA/AA credit ratings after recovering from near-bankruptcy conditions in 2018.

## **2. Indian River State College (IRSC)**

**Presenter:** Andy Treadwell, VP of Government & Community Relations

### **Highlights**

- IRSC enrollment continues to grow, now exceeding 24,000+ students, with 53% first-generation college students.
- The Promise Program guarantees tuition for high school graduates, significantly boosting local college participation.
- IRSC is rapidly scaling workforce programs in response to employer needs:
  - Nursing enrollment doubled to ~650 seats annually
  - 96% NCLEX pass rate; 99% job placement
  - Significant expansion in advanced manufacturing, robotics, automation, and mechatronics
  - New ACE manufacturing bootcamps yielding fast-track employment opportunities
- A Job Growth Grant award will help bring HVAC, electrical, and construction programs further into Indian River County.
- Upcoming changes in short-term Pell Grant eligibility (July 2026) will expand access to certificate and clock-hour programs.

## **C. Workforce Development Board of the Treasure Coast: CareerSource Research Coast**

**Presenters:** *Gregory McDonald (Career Center Manager)*

### **Highlights**

- CareerSource provides job-seeker support, employer services, labor market data, and education funding.
- Services include:
  - Skills assessments
  - Resume and interview training
  - Soft-skills and financial literacy workshops
  - Wage-reimbursed on-the-job training (50–100%)
  - Apprenticeships, internships, and summer youth employment
- CareerSource leverages the state’s Regional Demand Occupations List to determine approved training programs.
- Strong coordination exists with IRSC, TCTC, and United Against Poverty to ensure braided funding and career pathways.

## **D. United Against Poverty – STEP Program**

**Presenter:** *Matt Tanner, Executive Director*

### **Highlights**

- Serves residents facing barriers such as lack of diploma, homelessness, criminal background, mental health, or substance recovery.
- The STEP Program:
  - Four-week intensive training focused on emotional intelligence, job readiness, and workplace skills.
  - Followed by up to one year of coaching, job placement, and career navigation.
- 2025: 118 adults gained employment (program record); 2026 on track for 130+.
- Strong partnerships with Cleveland Clinic and TCTC provide job-shadowing, paid internships, and CNA pathway scholarships.
- Housing affordability and underemployment remain significant community challenges.

## **Key Themes & Takeaways**

### **Regional Workforce Strengths**

- Strong K-12 performance and career readiness pipelines.
- Expanding postsecondary and technical training infrastructure.
- Increased employer engagement in training partnerships.
- Innovative use of Opportunity Zones to drive investment and job growth.

## **Challenges Identified**

- Housing affordability affecting workforce stability.
- Need for increased wages in key sectors.
- Gaps in supportive infrastructure training (e.g., CDL, heavy equipment).
- Scaling capacity for retraining adults with barriers.

## **Consensus & Next Steps**

- EDC Chair will submit a Letter of Support to Florida Commerce for Opportunity Zones 2.0 tract nominations.
- Workforce partners encouraged deeper collaboration on communication, pipelines, employer engagement, and second-chance hiring.
- Community Services reminded members of the Youth Workforce Pipeline Event scheduled at the IG Center.

**7. Next Scheduled Meeting:** The next scheduled meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2026.

## **8. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Lance Lunceford, Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly K. Moirano  
Recording Secretary