

**CITY OF COLUMBUS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(EDA) Special Meeting
Alternative Meeting Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021**

October 14, 2025 – 4:00 p.m.

The October 14, 2025, Special Meeting of the City of Columbus Economic Development Authority was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by President Ron Hanegraaf. The meeting was conducted in an alternative meeting format via Zoom in accordance with Minnesota Statute 13D.021.

Present: Commissioners Ron Hanegraaf, Judy Huntosh, Karen Fleming, and Jennifer Lattin.

Staff Present: Executive Director Jack Davis and Secretary Aaron Berg.

Also in attendance via Zoom: Scott Wendell and Doug Hill.

1. Call to Order – 6:39 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Huntosh to approve the agenda as written. Seconded by Fleming.

Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Lattin – aye; Huntosh – aye; & Hanegraaf – aye. Motion carries.

4. Approval of August 21, 2025, EDA Meeting Minutes

The draft minutes from the August 21, 2025, Regular EDA Meeting were presented for review and approval.

Motion by Hanegraaf to approve the August 21, 2025, EDA minutes as presented. Seconded by Huntosh.

Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Huntosh – aye; Lattin – aye; & Hanegraaf – aye.

Motion carries.

5. EDA Member Responsibilities & Interview Question Review

Secretary Berg summarized the current EDA composition and reviewed the process for filling the new citizen-at-large vacancy created by the recent restructuring. The Commission discussed

desirable candidate qualifications and confirmed that some of interview questions previously used for EDA appointments remain appropriate for upcoming interviews.

Section 2.1 “Board” of the EDA bylaws was previously modified to include city residents with interest in or ties to the Columbus business community. The EDA requested the change be reflected in the bylaws and for EDA applicants.

Commissioners discussed the scheduling of interviews and determined that Commissioners Huntosh and Fleming along with the City Administrator or Assistant City Administrator will conduct the interviews and bring back a recommendation to the full EDA at a future Special Meeting with a date yet to be determined.

Motion by Hanegraaf to delegate EDA candidate interviews to Commissioners Huntosh and Fleming with the recommendation to be brought back to the EDA at a future Special Meeting to be called in November 2025. Seconded by Lattin.

Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Huntosh – aye; Lattin – aye; & Hanegraaf – aye. Motion carries.

6. ColumBiz Survey Results

Secretary Berg presented results of the recent ColumBiz business survey distributed to over 600 contacts, noting a 2.5% response rate (16 respondents). The survey reflected moderate awareness of the ColumBiz program, with preferences for networking events, marketing topics, and business growth strategies. Respondents generally preferred morning or evening sessions and expressed interest in guest speakers representing local business leadership or city updates.

The commissioners reviewed ways to communicate to and engage with new businesses. President Hanegraaf discussed going to a recent Columbus business grand opening event and having the Mayor of Forest Lake present along with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce president, while Columbus is not generally included in Forest Lake business grand openings. Commissioner Lattin noted a similar experience while attending a grand opening a few months prior.

Commissioner Fleming voiced concern with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce and noted that there are other area Chambers, like Ham Lake, that are inclusive of Columbus.

Commissioner Huntosh asked if the city or EDA communicated concerns or questions to the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce. City Administrator Jack Davis clarified that the city cannot legally be a member of a Chamber of Commerce but has close ties with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce. It was noted that the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce president had been invited to attend Columbus EDA meetings and had cancelled on two recent occasions.

Commissioner Lattin asked if the city has the ability to notify the EDA when new businesses plan to open in Columbus so that the EDA can reach out directly and coordinate grand openings and

events. Assistant Administrator Aaron Berg recommended that this could be a possibility while issuing a certificate of occupancy.

Commissioners discussed the potential to incorporate survey findings into planning for a spring 2026 ColumBiz event and to spotlight new local businesses.

Staff were directed to coordinate a Spring evening social style meeting at Running Aces on a Thursday evening in March or April.

7. Old Business

- a. Comprehensive Bylaw Amendments – Deferred to a future meeting for continued discussion.
- b. Tourism – Commissioners discussed permissible use of tourism tax revenue and future consideration of Columbus promotional materials and regional marketing collaboration.

8. Other Business

Commissioners discussed EDA visibility in the community and supported maintaining a standing “Old Business” section on future agendas for follow-up continuity.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next EDA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 18, 2025, with a workshop at 5:30 pm with the regular meeting to follow at 6 pm.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Hanegraaf to adjourn. Seconded by Lattin .

Roll call vote: Lattin – aye; Huntosh – aye; Fleming – aye; & Hanegraaf – aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Berg, Secretary

Disclaimer:

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