



**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

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The Columbia Economic and Community Development Committee met on Tuesday, August 9, 2022 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Columbia, SC. The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. *The minutes are numbered to coincide with the order of the meeting.*

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>
Joe E. Taylor	Chair	Present
Will Brennan	District III	Present
Tina N. Herbert	District I	Present

**PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

1. General Information on Programs - Ms. Diane E. Sumpter, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of DESA, Inc. – *This item was deferred.*
2. 2221 Devine Street - The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Jr.

There was consensus of the committee to assign Councilor Taylor as liaison to city staff to develop a plan for the building at 2221 Devine Street.

3. 1401 Main Street - The Honorable Joe E. Taylor, Jr.

There was consensus of the committee to assign Councilor Brennan as liaison to city staff to develop a plan for the building at 1401 Main Street.

Councilor Brennan asked about the process.

Councilor Taylor said the committee doesn't have authority to take any particular action. It has to go through Council.

Councilor Brennan said this committee is a good sounding board.



We Are Columbia

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

4. Grease Trap Rebate Program - Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water

Councilor Taylor said I want a legal opinion if we can't do the rebate program or an ordinance that allows us to do the rebate program. I want to get out of the forgivable loan business. People have to put them on their financial statements. It could have a negative fiscal impact. The money lets us boost the \$5,000 loan to a \$10,000 rebate.

Councilor Brennan asked if we looked at West Columbia's structure.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said the current forgivable loan program has been modified and opened up to any food service establishment within city limits, whether it is new, redevelopment, or reopening. We had conversations with West Columbia about what they are doing. I have to refer to the city attorney about the legalities of the hospitality tax rebate but we've modified the program. It is still the \$5,000 cap or half.

Councilor Taylor said you have to put a forgivable loan on your financial statement and you have to disclose it to your bank. It creates risk for the tax payers. I would rather go to \$10,000 and do a rebate program where there is no risk to the taxpayer. It has no negative fiscal impact and it doesn't require our small businesses to put it down as a loan when they may need an operating loan.

Councilor Herbert said that is a new program. Do we want to restructure or do we want someone to come back with what that would look like and whether it is doable? We need to see what it looks like so we can compare it.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said the administrative framework of the program can be similar. It is a matter of working with our compliance staff on the water side. Currently, it is half of the construction value up to \$5,000. Some of the bones are there for a program; it is really a funding source issue.

Councilor Taylor said today, you are taking money out of your budget to loan it to somebody. You would either do a rebate or allow them to fill out the credit on it.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said the rebate will come from the collections that they have after they've opened and then we will rebate those funds back. I will work with the Business License Division on how to track that. I have been working with the city attorney to make sure we can utilize the hospitality tax in this way. Based on outside legal, we believe we can do this. We will have to put some whereas clauses to show that it is public use and an appropriate use for the hospitality tax. We can have this back before the meeting in September.

Councilor Taylor said we will have a standing Economic and Community Development Committee meeting on the second Tuesday of each month. If there is nothing to come before us, we will cancel. Have something for us to look at for the September meeting.

Councilor Herbert asked to see what West Columbia is doing.

Councilor Taylor asked staff to consider the rebate for restaurant expansions, too. Clint will share with you that 15 years ago there was no mandate for grease capture. This is a new cost and an appropriate environmental cost that we put on hospitality businesses. This is more expensive than people think and it catches a lot of small businesses by surprise.

Councilor Herbert concurred. When I was in the Office of Business Opportunities, people would buy properties thinking they would have a restaurant and when they realized they needed a grease trap they had already spent the money and had to change the purpose of their building and start catering. It is a common problem. We have to educate folks on what they need.

Councilor Brennan asked about the current staff process.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said it is the initial contact, sizing of the grease trap, and approval of the grease trap. The Office of Business Opportunities handles the loan process.

Councilor Brennan asked if it is drafted out of water invoices.

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water said \$100,000 was set aside two years ago and we've been drawing down off of that for the payments. It was originally funded with water and sewer dollars. The balance is around \$65,000.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Councilor Taylor said if we convert it to a rebate, we would let you recapture that funding back into the water and sewer fund.

There was consensus of the committee to review a draft ordinance for the grease trap rebate program in September.

5. Office of Business Opportunities Update - Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager

Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Development announced that Melissa Linder, the former director of the Office of Business Opportunities resigned a few weeks ago and we currently have Ayesha Driggers as interim director until we decide otherwise.

Councilor Taylor asked if we will look at creating a procurement group that includes the Office of Business Opportunities.

Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Development said we want to get the results back from the disparity study before we make changes to the organizational structure.

Councilor Taylor asked if we will look at that before we make a permanent hire.

Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Development said absolutely.

6. Columbia Economic Development Department Action Plan - Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said last week, staff sent out an organizational chart and development plan. We received a lot of feedback. Mr. Coleman can walk through the plan and we welcome feedback on your thoughts on what we have because a lot of our priorities will be established when we have discussions with you all each month.

Councilor Taylor said you want to go through this today. Will you make revisions and go to Council or come back to the committee in September.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said we can bring this back to the committee in September, finalize it, and then take it back to Council.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Councilor Taylor asked if we advertised for the business recruiter. I want to make sure that this will not have a negative impact on the hiring of that staff person.

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said it will not. The budget you all approved this year had funding for different roles. This will not effect that.

Mr. Jim Daniel said I checked the agenda this morning. Whatever you are discussing has not been posted on the city website. There has been no public review of this document. Is that the way you all are going to be operating now?

Councilor Taylor said this is a committee meeting. There is no quorum of City Council here. It is a draft plan. You are welcome to sit in here and hear staff's proposal. There will be no vote today. When it gets to City Council for consideration, it will be posted.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director presented the economic development plan for the upcoming year. We wanted to take a fresh look at our efforts and capture some of the city council priorities. A lot of this is based heavily on the retreat and the discussion around economic growth. We wanted to focus on business friendly improvements. The first item involves creating a structure for business feedback on improvement initiatives. We wanted to look at an alternative structure for a singular business advisory council to meet with us bi-monthly or quarterly to provide tactical feedback.

Councilor Herbert said I agree, but I also want us to consider the several groups that are already meeting and some of them are businesses that do business with the city.

Councilor Taylor said it would be an ex-officio council. They would not be appointed by Council. The Office of Economic Development would assemble the group to hear about the issues they are facing or the industries we need to recruit.

Councilor Herbert asked if this would be similar to the old business retention program.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said no, this will be more of a committee structure. Business retention work will be still be done through individual meetings. Our developers group met recently to give feedback on the business friendly improvements we have done. They keyed in on a continued focus on parking. They like the idea of expanding the grease trap program because those costs are escalating.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said it doesn't replace any of the other groups. Ryan's staff will still attend those meetings, because those are good ideas for us to have. Councilman Taylor mentioned bringing in some of those members to this advisory board.

Councilor Herbert asked how members will be chosen.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we want a diverse group.

Councilor Taylor said you will pick your group.

Mr. Jim Daniel said I hope you involve neighborhood residents because of the possible effects the changes may have on the neighborhood.

Councilor Brennan said please include someone from the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said staff will work to increase support for expedited permitting approvals, reducing the turnaround times, and coordinating more with developers and planning staff to focus on areas where we can simplify our process from a planning perspective. I would like to work with Krista and her staff more to see where the efficiencies are.

Councilor Taylor said it should be all permits.

Councilor Herbert said this has to be done through Planning and Development Services and I want to make sure we are not giving Economic Development the responsibility of making sure it happens but giving them the appropriate feedback so that the department gets it.

Councilor Brennan asked if the Planning and Development Services Department is appropriately staffed with plan reviewers and everything needed to help us meet these milestones.

Councilor Taylor said if we are not, that would be one of the recommendations that comes back to us. How do we create more predictability on the timing and permitting of projects?

Councilor Herbert said that question is valid. If they are not staffed up, we are going to have a hard time hitting this.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said we are not doing this in a silo. If staffing is an issue, we would know that.

Councilor Herbert asked if we already know the approval times for small, medium and large businesses.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we need to see where we are now and what our aspirations need to be.

Councilor Taylor said it would be cool to have a permit desk where a small business with a non-structural and non-mechanical permit need would be able to walk out with a permit. We need to study our permitting process with the goal of bringing clarity on the timelines.

Councilor Herbert asked if we know for a fact that we aren't hitting these goals.

Councilor Taylor said on some we are and most we aren't.

Councilor Herbert said make sure we are considering technology to help us be more efficient.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said relocating Economic Development staff to City Hall will help speed up the decision making process. We see lags when we need input from key decision makers. It will be easier to expedite those conversations when we are crossing paths more often.

Councilor Herbert asked for an example of when it has been difficult to get to decision makers.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said it is a time lag. I have a letter of intent that we are working on for the former hydrogen fueling station. The mayor is verbally in agreement. We have the letter of intent, but have not been able to connect with him to get it signed.

Councilor Taylor said it saves us money. If a question needs to be answered, it would be cool to take a prospect straight to the mayor's office or the city manager's office.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said the business liaison position was recruited in 2021.

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**We Are Columbia**

---

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Councilor Taylor said that Greg Williams has done a fantastic job with existing and new businesses. Incorporating you into the economic development side will be a really good thing. I hope we will need two of you in short order.

Councilor Brennan asked for Greg's feedback on what he has heard over the past year.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we are working to capture the anecdotal feedback and the economic impact.

Councilor Taylor said I made a note to be an advocate for businesses and keep the city manager and staff apprised of issues that are effecting businesses in Columbia. It will be the responsibility of the economic development manager to make sure we are aware of issues.

Councilor Herbert said especially if you are seeing a trend and we need to make a change. It would be positive if we could find a better way to work together.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will prioritize the importance of urban development targets and new capital. We created a list and refined the verbiage to be reflective of restaurant, retail, hotel, urban residential, and corporate back office.

Councilor Taylor said the county is leading the charge on the manufacturing side and the regional alliances. I don't think anybody in this state has paid attention to recruiting urban types of operations: shopping centers, retail, grocery stores, doctors' offices, hotels, urban residential units and building the population of our city center. The best thing the city of Columbia can do to create buffalo projects in and around our city is to create a vibrant city life; a city that is clean, beautiful and exciting with things to do. We are going to look for things that you put in a city.

Councilor Herbert asked to add grocery stores as a specific item.

Councilor Brennan added office and office towers. We have to know what we are good at and what we are fit for. We have affordable lease rates in the urban core. We should market to our strength.

Councilor Taylor said we have to think about the hard to employee folks who can use public transportation. Everybody deserves to have the ability to go to work, feel like they are making a contribution, and to take care of their families.



**We Are Columbia**

---

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Councilor Herbert said if folks are working hard in the city center, I want them to be able to live in the city center.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will fill the newly created business recruitment position and structure the office to support that role on urban infill projects and startup recruitment. This is an opportunity to create more engagement with the mayor and city manager. We will build out the dataset to sell the city.

Councilor Taylor said you have to come up with a plan. It needs to be a marketable set. I have spoken to the chairman of the Board of Trustees at USC and they will work with us on that. I would think that Dr. Amiridis would have a desire, too. That should be a top priority. We need a pitch book for the city of Columbia.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will target our development efforts on geography with a focus on building a strong core and corridors where we have the most prevalent opportunities. We will drive the things we are talking about into the commercial areas that already have development opportunities.

Councilor Taylor said Broad River Road and North Main Street have great opportunities and I want to make sure we concentrate in these areas, as well as downtown.

Councilor Herbert said you can't focus on the entire city all the time, prior Councils had certain corridors that they focused on for two or three years.

Councilor Taylor said all business is good business as long as it lands in the city. Success and recruitment begets more success and recruitment.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said over 35 businesses have opened. We need to build upon that, capture the momentum, and drive it. We need to leverage USC and other local colleges for recruitment. We have companies that are interested in internships. The talent drives the equation for projects and office locations.

Councilor Taylor said having 55,000 college students here is an asset. We can serve as a depot for matching businesses with intern programs.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will recruit new capital. We will target specific conferences and trade shows.

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**We Are Columbia**

---

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Councilor Taylor suggested incorporating our city manager and mayor into attending these shows. It shows that we are engaged as a city.

Councilor Herbert asked if we have the materials needed to attend these events.

Councilor Taylor said you were correct when you said that the dataset should be our top priority.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said under marketing, we will develop a new strategy, collateral and datasets. We will leverage and continue to promote the business-friendly improvements. We are developing collateral for a restaurant recruitment program and it should be ready in a couple of weeks. We talked about ways to promote existing businesses and other fun things we can do in conjunction with Public Relations, Media and Marketing to highlight the great businesses we already have here.

Councilor Brennan asked where is the grassroots, boots on the ground recruitment concept of going to Charlotte, Raleigh, Winston Salem, Greensboro, Atlanta, Charleston and Greenville to get face-to-face with smaller restaurants that may not have national brokerage representation. It seems like a good investment. Is that being considered?

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said it would be more helpful if we could get that restaurant piece in place. Last week, Greg and I made calls to people in Greenville. We want to identify several of them in advance and structure a trip.

Councilor Herbert said we should start with Tupelo Honey Café. They have one in Greenville, Asheville and Myrtle Beach.

Councilor Taylor said you need a pitch book to show them the locations that will work and the programs that are in place. In a year, you might add a research person to put the pitch book together. The mayor and city manager needs a travel card that they can handwrite their numbers on for prospects.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will implement new email automation services. We want to continue to the strong working relationship we have built with GrowCo. We will work with them on the Boyd Community Innovation Center and their new builders to backers program, which is an accelerator program. We will look for creative ways to create inner-city neighborhoods and help promote the small businesses in those neighborhoods so we make those areas fun.

Councilor Herbert added and walkable.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will be involved in the upcoming Growth Summit which is a two-day conference that will bring folks into the city. We talked about the concept of a pitch pilot to present our urgent and unsolved problems.

Councilor Herbert said there is a HBCU pitch competition and they want the city to give them one of our biggest problems and it will go to tons of students to work on.

Councilor Taylor suggested giving them the grocery store on North Main. This will turn the kids into advocates for the city.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we want more small business capacity building.

Councilor Taylor said as you engage with more people, we will find out what the issues are.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will find more ways to promote the founder success stories. This is oriented towards the entrepreneur who built a business from the ground up. We will focus our outreach strategies. We want to meet with at least one hundred businesses in a year to identify issues and opportunities. We can help them individually or identify macro level issues. Do we want to incorporate a small, woman, and minority business focus?

Councilor Herbert asked if we are still doing business retention.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we still do this. Some of our capacity has diminished due to staff turnover. We had six or seven visits with existing businesses. I have two more scheduled this week.



**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

Mr. Jeff Palen, Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer said we have talked about the idea of senior staff visiting at least one business a week. It helps decision makers get involved with the community and it is good for the local community to see us.

Councilor Taylor said that is a spectacular deal.

Councilor Herbert agreed to visit a couple of businesses a month.

Councilor Taylor suggested that ten senior city staffers make one visit a quarter.

Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will gauge impact by looking at our growth in business licenses, the number of announcements, new jobs, capital investment, city center population growth year over year, and increased city revenue streams.

Councilor Herbert asked who can help with annexations.

Ms. Missy Gentry, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Development said we have an annexation coordinator whose tasks need to be different.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager said there have been times when council wanted a dedicated annexation person. If we get these things going first it would be more beneficial to the staff person telling the story.

Councilor Herbert said we need to set goals for properties or areas we want to annex. Councilmembers can help with that, too. In order to grow the tax base we have to go from waiting on people to pulling people.

Councilor Brennan said over the next 18-months you will see a good case study for organic annexations. We annexed a lot of acreage in the Garners Ferry corridor that is going to have a commercial front and residential in the back. We will see how that triggers people who may have been on the fence and neighborhoods that have been anti-annexation.

There was consensus of the committee to circulate a clean version of the Economic Development Plan to the full Council and bring it back to the committee on September 13, 2022. If there's nothing earth-shattering, we can put it on the next Council agenda and advertise it to the public.

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**We Are Columbia**

**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022**

---

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Brennan and seconded by Ms. Herbert, the committee members voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 2:17 p.m. for the discussion of item 7 as outlined.

7. Discussion of matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body pursuant to §30-4-70(a)(5)
  - a. Wells Fargo Project
  - b. Project Framework
  - c. Capital City Stadium
  - d. Revisions to Commercial Development Incentives

**ADJOURNMENT**

The committee meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC  
City Clerk