

NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 14, 2025
7:00 A.M.
Business Resource Center

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, Nyesha Greer, Typhanie Myers, Scott Foushee, Hiro Kado, and Lee Scoggins.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Chairman Dean Sides and Benjy Harris.

OTHERS PRESENT

Others present were NEDC Executive Director Jon Chadwell, Director of Chamber Affairs Julie Allen, Director of Workforce Christel Taylor, Mayor Derrick Ratliffe, Ed Rull, Bryson Schulz, Marcus Lewis, Julia Brown, and Charles Walker.

OPEN MEETING

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr. opened the meeting and welcomed guests from New Vision Class 21 along with Mayor Derrick Ratliffe and Charles Walker from ASUN.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Mike Turner made a motion to accept the minutes from September, with a second by Scott Foushee, motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for September. Advertising expenses were up due to hosting AEDC in September. A ReNewport Grant for PB&J Café for signage totaled \$2,286.26. Sales tax and obligations were presented to the commission. Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner made a motion to accept the financial statements for September with a second from Dr. Typhanie Myers, motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- John Conner, Jr
- Jackson Holdings
- 75 Strong
- Garrett Jacobs

DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT

- New Vision Class 21
- Kids Fest/Depot Days
- Southern Delta Q
- 150th Time Capsule
- 75 Strong Training

- Trashiest Team Cleanup Contest
- Anchor Cottage Ribbon Cutting at John 3:17

RENEWPORT GRANTS

None currently.

2026 BUDGET APPROVAL

The budget for 2026 for the Newport Economic Development Commission was presented to the commission. Director Jon Chadwell wanted to note that expenses for building insurance would be higher and a new website will be developed in 2026, increasing expenses. The budget includes a three percent raise for Assistant Director of Finance Crystal Fulmer and Director of Workforce Christel Taylor. Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner made a motion to approve the 2026 Budget with a second by Nyesha Greer, motion carried.

DIAZ REFINERY PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The property located at 2601 Van Dyke Road, known as the Diaz Refinery, is currently for sale. The site is in poor condition and is prominently visible to anyone traveling to Granges or Arkansas Steel. The most recent annual inspection confirmed that there is no ongoing contamination present on the property. The former Superfund site has been listed for sale. Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner made a motion for \$80,000 plus closing costs to the Jackson County Bond Board to purchase the refinery with a second by Scott Foushee, motion carried.

STORM CAMERA FUNDING REQUEST

Richard Carraway proposed installing an Arkansas SkyCam for weather forecasting on the Carraway Accounting office. He offered to purchase a stationary camera valued at \$1,400. A Pan-Tilt Zoom Camera, which provides enhanced functionality, ranges in cost from \$3,500 to \$5,500. Mr. Carraway invited the commission to consider covering the price difference should they wish to upgrade to the zoom model. Following discussion, Nyesha Greer made a motion to table the item; however, the motion did not receive a second.

INDUSTRIAL SITE INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT UPDATE

The road on Comet Drive will be redone.

THIRD AND LAUREL PARKING LOT UPDATE

During its most recent meeting, the Newport City Council voted to accept the bid from Province Construction for the parking lot located at Third and Laurel.

PROSPECT RING 2

Director Jon Chadwell has had three zooms with Prospect Ring 2 and the prospect is looking to visit Newport in the next month.

JACKSON HOLDINGS HOUSING PROJECT

Jackson Holdings, represented by Kyle Tiffée and Matt Johnson, has expressed interest in developing new housing in Newport. The company recently completed and sold a home in Tuckerman and now plans to build eight homes at a time in Newport, with a total of approximately 60 homes proposed for the project. The development would feature starter homes ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 square feet and would be located on the former Newport Hospital property. Director Chadwell requested a review of the company's current financial position, and Jackson Holdings indicated a desire to partner with Unity Health on the project.

75 STRONG

Julie Allen, Jon Chadwell, and Christel Taylor attended the IEDC Virtual Meeting for the 75 Strong initiative on September 25–26. The next training session is scheduled to be held in person in December.

TECH DEPOT UPDATE

Tech Depot remains very active, with the calendar already filling up for 2026. Several organizations, including ASBTDC, APEX Accelerator, and the Jackson County Community Crisis Coalition, have scheduled upcoming meetings at the facility. In March, Tech Depot will host a traveling exhibit in partnership with the Daughters of the American Revolution. The exhibit, coming from the Clinton Library, will include a program presented by the DAR chapter in Searcy.

CALL CENTER UPDATE

Province Construction is set to complete the project by February 17, 2026. Asbestos removal and the sprinkler system is currently being installed.

P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE

The Newport School District and P3 have agreed to the lots costing \$51,000 per lot. Phase I will be more expensive than Phase II.

A-STATE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER UPDATE

The A-State Child Development Center is still hiring employees to increase enrollment.

PROSPECT SMOCO

Jon Chadwell has heard the lease has been signed between Waffle House and Tractor Supply.

PROSPECT RICE STRAW

Prospect Rice Straw has ordered equipment and continues to move forward.

PROSPECT FRESH AT HOME

Prospect Fresh at Home is looking to start in December.

PROJECT FUEL UP UPDATE

Project Fuel Up lease is not yet signed.

PROJECT LANDSHARK

Project Landshark will open before the end of the year. Painting has already started on the building.

PROJECT TERMINATOR

Project Terminator is an AI project that would require 1,200 acres.

NEW – PROSPECT BLANKET

Prospect Blanket is a project that would make a wrap that goes around hay bales. Currently the product is being manufactured outside of the US and would hope to give the prospect a competitive advantage.

ADJOURNED

Lee Scoggins made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Scott Foushee, meeting adjourned.