

**NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**Monday, November 17, 2025 (Rescheduled from 11<sup>th</sup> due to lack of a quorum)**  
**10:00 A.M.**  
**Business Resource Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Chairman Dean Sides, Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, Hiro Kado, Nyesha Greer, Lee Scoggins, Benjy Harris, and Scott Foushee.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Typhanie Myers

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Others present were NEDC Executive Director Jon Chadwell, Director of Chamber Affairs Julie Allen, Director of Workforce Christel Taylor, Mayor Derrick Ratliffe, and Ed Rull.

**OPEN MEETING**

Chairman Dean Sides opened the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to accept the minutes from October, with a second by Scott Foushee, motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for October. Director Chadwell presented the sales tax and obligations. Lee Scoggins made a motion to accept the financial statements for October with a second from Scott Foushee, motion carried.

**BUDGET ADJUSTMENT**

Commissioner Benjy Harris made a motion for a bonus for Jon Chadwell in the amount of \$10,000. Mike Turner seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- Na Tran, City Nails
- Comet Drive Update
- Richard Sheban, Sharks Fish and Chicken
- Gen4 Jets
- United Bit Engine

## **DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT**

- New Vision Class 21, Placemaking Projects
- Festival of Trees
- Southern Delta Q, Ribbon Cutting
- Sharks Fish and Chicken
- 75 Strong Training
- Trashiest Team Cleanup Contest
- Christmas Parade, December 11

## **RENEWPORT GRANTS**

Sharks Fish & Chicken located at 2210 Malcolm, in Newport, has requested a ReNewport grant to help with painting. The ReNewport grant would be responsible for \$2,500. Jim Gowen Sr. made the motion to approve the ReNewport Grant with a second from Lee Scoggins, motion carried.

## **MEETING LOCATIONS (TRAVELING TO INDUSTRIES) IN 2026**

The NEDC has been asked to consider holding commission meetings at some of our local industries, as was done in the past. The commission discussed this idea and agreed it would be beneficial to resume the practice a few times each year. Hosting meetings at various industry locations will provide commissioners with a better understanding of local operations, strengthen relationships with employers, and highlight the important role these industries play in our community's economy.

## **INDUSTRIAL APPRECIATION EVENT**

Director Jon Chadwell initiated a discussion with the commission regarding the possibility of hosting an Industrial Appreciation event. The commission explored ideas for what such an event could include and agreed to gather suggestions to help shape its format and focus. The goal is to create an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the contributions of local industries.

## **DIAZ REFINERY PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

The purchase of the Diaz Refinery property will require title insurance, which the seller has agreed to cover due to the property's high-risk nature. The commission discussed postponing any cleanup effort until all purchase details are finalized. It was noted that the property is currently in poor condition, creating a negative impression for those traveling through the area to Granges or Arkansas Steel. The commission expressed interest in addressing the property's appearance once ownership and liability matters are resolved.

## **REDI SITE CERTIFICATION PROJECT**

The REDI Site Certification Project is a resource utilized by site consultants to evaluate potential locations for development projects. Participation requires an application fee and an annual listing cost. Director Jon Chadwell is currently researching other communities that have used the program to determine whether it would be beneficial for Newport to pursue participation.

## **STORM CAMERA FUNDING REQUEST**

The request for funding a storm camera through Arkansas SkyCam was revisited, noting that it did not receive a second at the previous meeting. Arkansas SkyCam has also approached eight other locations in Newport for additional installations. Currently, the NEDC has decided not to pursue funding for this project.

### **INDUSTRIAL SITE INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT UPDATE**

Jon Chadwell submitted the grant to continue improvements on the certified site on November 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **THIRD AND LAUREL PARKING LOT UPDATE**

The parking lot project at Third and Laurel experienced some complications, which have since been resolved. The Arkansas Department of Transportation requested a few modifications to the original plans, and those adjustments will be made accordingly.

### **JACKSON HOLDINGS HOUSING PROJECT**

Representatives from the Jackson Holdings Housing Project met with Unity Health to discuss the possibility of developing housing on property owned by the hospital. Jackson Holdings has secured a letter of support for the project to accompany their loan application in the amount of \$350,000.

### **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 will be held in person in December in Conway, where the team will continue preparation for the Economic Development Professional (EDP) exam.

### **TECH DEPOT UPDATE**

Tech Depot remains active, hosting 133 class hours in October and totaling 1,263 class hours year-to-date. Bad Boy Mowers will hold a hiring event at Tech Depot this Saturday, and a blood drive with the American Red Cross is scheduled for December 22.

### **CALL CENTER UPDATE**

Province Construction is on schedule to complete the project by February 17, 2026. Current progress includes the installation of the elevator, interior painting, and concrete work being completed on-site today.

### **P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE**

The P3 Group will meet with the Newport School District Board on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. if anyone would like to attend.

### **DETERIORATING PROPERTY OPTIONS**

Mayor Derrick Ratliffe, Director Jon Chadwell, City Inspector Trey Randolph, and City Treasurer Debbie Hembrey will attend a conference tomorrow that will cover how cities and counties can remove deteriorating property.

### **PROSPECT SMOCO**

Jon Chadwell has heard the property issues surrounding the Waffle House location are very close to resolution.

### **PROSPECT RICE STRAW**

Prospect Rice Straw is moving forward.

### **PROSPECT FRESH AT HOME**

Prospect Fresh at Home is working on the plumbing currently. Newport is already listed on the Dominos app.

### **PROJECT FUEL UP UPDATE**

Project Fuel Up should close on their property by the end of 2025.

### **PROJECT HI HO**

Project Hi Ho is a project that is looking to assemble the computers for cryptocurrency. Due to tariffs on Chinese imports it would reduce tariff costs from 100 percent to 15 percent.

### **PROJECT TERMINATOR**

Project Terminator is an AI project that would require at least 1,200 acres and a large amount of power.

### **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.

### **PROSPECT FLIP FLOP**

Prospect Flip Flop will be looking at the old Walgreens building.

### **ADJOURNED**

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