**MEETING MINUTES**

**Location:** City Hall at St. James, 117 West Duval St., Second Floor, Suite 250, Large Conference Room, Jacksonville, FL 32202

**Advisory Committee Members Present:** Chair Fred Atwill, Jr.; Valerie H. Jenkins, George Barnes, and Philip Elson

**Advisory Committee Members Absent**: Vice-Chair Cedrick Gibson and Tillery Durbin

**Office of Economic Development Staff Present:**  Ed Randolph, OED Executive Director; Joe Whitaker, OED staff; Brian Bergen, Director of Economic Programs; and Michelle Stephens, OED staff

**Representing the Office of General Counsel:**  Joelle Dillard

**Representing City Council:** N/A

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Atwill called the NWJEDF Advisory Committee meeting to order at approximately 3:43 p.m. Around the table introductions were made. A quorum was confirmed.

1. **ACTION ITEMS**

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 25, 2024 NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

***A MOTION WAS MADE BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER GEORGE BARNES AND SECONDED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER VALERIE H. JENKINS APPROVING THE MARCH 25, 2024 MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. 4-0-0.***

PROJECT GIANT

Mr. Brian Bergen provided an overview of Project Giant. Project Giant is an existing Northwest business interested in expanding and diversifying its current operations. They plan to expand its current food and beverage service operation, add cabins for overnight stays, and increase their food processing capabilities. The Private Capital Investment is estimated at $6.8 million. The Company plans to create 12 full-time permanent jobs. The City proposes to provide a 50% REV Grant up to 5 years in the amount of $250,000 and a Small Business Development Initiative (SBDI) Loan at 3% for 10 years up to $250,000 for a total of up to $500,000 in City incentives.

Advisory Committee Member Jenkins inquired about the project name and where the project is located. Mr. Bergen replied that the location of the project is within the boundaries of the NWJEDF area.

She asked why we decided to use code names versus the company’s name. Mr. Bergen replied that the company requested to remain anonymous. Mr. Whitaker added that all projects are different and in this particular case they requested confidentiality. According to state statue we have to comply with the request.

Advisory Committee Member Barnes asked about the location of the project. Mr. Whitaker replied that the project is located near the VA Cemetery. He requested a map in the future of the general location of a project within the NW area.

Advisory Committee Member George Barnes asked about the cabins on site. Mr. Bergen replied that they do not have cabins on site now adding that they will be a new addition to the business to enhance the revenue, utilize the property that they have and increase tourism. He asked why a guest would want to go there and use a cabin. Mr. Bergen replied they could host a wedding, or just want to get away for the weekend. Making it a destination.

Advisory Committee Member Elson asked for more information related to the improvements. Mr. Bergen replied that the existing food facility will be expanded and enclosed so they have more opportunity for year around dining and increasing the number of products that they make based on what they grow.

Advisory Committee Member Jenkins asked if the proposed project will create additional synergy for the area and if the community was aware of the proposed project. Mr. Bergen agreed that it would and that there have been conversations with the community.

Chair Atwill opened the floor for public comment. There were no comments from the public.

***A MOTION WAS MADE BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER PHILIP ELSON AND SECONDED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER VALERIE JENKINS APPROVING A NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (BIG) TO PROJECT GIANT AND A SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (SBDI) LOAN FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT OF CITY INCENTIVES UP TO $500,000. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0-0.***

PROJECT SOUL

Mr. Brian Bergen provided an overview of Project Soul noting the restaurant is located at 2527 N. Main Street in a Level 2 Economically Distressed Area of Jacksonville and has been operating at its current location for 20 years. The owner of the restaurant has purchased a blighted building next to their existing location to turn into a banquet hall. The estimated Private Capital Investment is approximately $1 million. He added that in the past, the owner has purchased several buildings in the area and has made improvements to them. Mr. Bergen noted that they are creating 9 new jobs (5 FT and 4 PT).

The City is proposing to provide a Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund (NWJEDF) Business Infrastructure Grant (BIG) to Project Soul to support the expansion and renovation of a 6,970 square foot building located at 2509 N. Main Street, in a Level 2 Economically Distressed Area, and authorize the Mayor and Corporation Secretary to execute an Economic Development Agreement (EDA) by and between the City and Project Soul (Island Tropics Restaurant and Lounge).

Advisory Committee Member Jenkins advised for full disclosure that this company may have in the past received grants as a result of the organization that she works for. She asked if she should refrain from voting on the project. She added that it has probably been more than 10 years adding that the grant was not provided through her organization but rather to a third party that supports small businesses and that this particular organization may have been a recipient of some of those funds. Her company had nothing to do with the decisioning of the grants, but they have catered a number of events at the center supporting community efforts off of Main Street.

Joelle Dillard, Office of General Council replied that without knowing all the facts and being in the past, she did not see a problem with Advisory Committee Member Jenkins voting on the project, as long as that is the case.

***A MOTION WAS MADE BY ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR FRED ATWILL, JR. AND SECONDED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER GEORGE BARNES APPROVING A NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (BIG) TO PROJECT SOUL UP TO $100,000. THE MOTION PASSED 4-0-0.***

1. **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

NWJEDF FINANCIALS UPDATE – PRESENTED BY JOE WHITAKER, OED PROJECT MANAGER

Mr. Whitaker briefly reviewed the NWJEDF Financials. He noted that there are no loans in default at this time. He advised that the fund balance as of July 24, 2024 is $2.5 million.

Advisory Committee Member Jenkins asked about the status of the AA Auto Parts project.

Mr. Whitaker responded that staff has requested an amendment with City Council to their Economic Development Agreement that will allow for a 12-month extension to the completion deadline of September 30, 2025, due to unexpected delays in the timing of the receipt and installation of the transformer needed for the shredder system. He added that there is a nationwide shortage of transformers. The company has had a transformer on order for some time.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

Advisory Committee Member Jenkins asked about the status of her appointment/reappointment to the Advisory Committee. She added that because of her business role she has to submit a list of boards and committees that she serves on annually.

Mr. Whitaker replied that Advisory Committee Members can serve until the expiration of their term, or until a replacement is made, or with written notice may resign their position. She added that the Mayor’s Office is working on appointments/reappointments.

Joelle Dillard, OGC advised Advisory Committee Member Jenkins that she is on the board until she resigns or somebody is reappointed to replace her.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was discussed.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the public.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chair Atwill adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:20 p.m.

The next quarterly NWJEDF Advisory Committee meeting date is TBD.

The written minutes for this meeting are only an overview of what was discussed. For verbatim comments, an audio file of the meeting is available upon request. Please contact Michelle Stephens at (904) 255-5452, or by email at [msteph@coj.net](mailto:msteph@coj.net).