

Town of Richlands  
Industrial/Economic Development Authority  
April 7, 2025

The Richlands IEDA held its regular monthly meeting at 6 p.m. with the following present:

Lynna Mitchell	Dillon Smith
Craig Earls	Joseph Vance
Jeff Casey	Dr. Brandon Buskill

Members Absent: Cody Harman  
Town Representatives: Susan Whitt  
Guests: Tim Danielson, Ashley Harris

**Call to Order:**

Dr. Brandon Buskill called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Agenda:**

Joseph Vance made a motion to approve the agenda with the proposed addition. Craig Earls seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

The minutes from the March 3rd meetings were presented for approval. Joseph Vance made a motion to approve the minutes. Jeff Casey seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved with corrections.

**IEDA Discussion Items:**

**Tim Danielson – Richlands Enterprise Zone Designation**

Tim Danielson introduced Ashley Harris, who joined to discuss the upcoming renewal and potential amendment of the Richlands Enterprise Zone designation. The current designation is set to expire this year, and an application for a 10-year extension must be submitted.

As part of the renewal process, the Town can amend the incentive programs and adjust the zone boundaries. Any boundary adjustments must remain contiguous, but the Town can revise the shape and coverage of the zone. Two public hearings are required if there are any proposed changes to incentives or boundaries.

A meeting has been scheduled with Mandy Archer from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). It will take place at 11:00 AM on May 16th in the Board of Supervisors meeting room.

**Enterprise Zone Overview:**

The Enterprise Zone benefits businesses located within the designated zone. If a business is growing and meets certain thresholds in capital investment, property improvements, or full-time equivalent (FTE) job creation, it may qualify for up to three years of Enterprise Zone benefits.

Local incentives offered must be recorded with the state and made available to qualifying businesses.

Lynna Mitchell: What does it mean if businesses apply or don't apply for incentives?

Tim Danielson: For example, in Bluefield, local incentives include property tax rebates. Once reported to the state, these incentives must be made available to any qualifying business that receives an Enterprise Zone designation.

Lynna Mitchell: Can real estate incentives be included?

Tim Danielson: Yes, but the business must apply through the state to access any local or state incentives. Currently, Richlands offers one incentive. The Town should review this and consider adding others.

Craig Earls: What is the filing deadline?

Tim Danielson: November 1st. The application must be submitted by then and include documentation of the two public hearings and legal reviews by the Town Attorney.

Craig Earls: Why not designate the entire Town for business use instead of cherry-picking areas?

Kiesha Cole (no longer with the Town of Richlands) noted that in the past, she worked with Mr. May to extend the Enterprise Zone to include the Roses shopping area and downtown.

Tim Danielson: There may be cases in certain zone areas to exclude or designate as other zone types (like Technology Zone).

Jeff Casey: Can we add to the zone later?

Tim Danielson: Yes, the zone boundaries can be amended annually.

Joseph Vance: Are there any recommended incentives?

Tim Danielson: Consider adding incentives such as meals tax abatement, hotel room tax relief, or real estate/property tax assistance.

Joseph Vance: How would this apply to businesses in Claypool Hill?

Tim Danielson: The Enterprise Zone would only apply to properties within Richlands town's limits.

Lynna Mitchell: Are there job creation incentives?

Tim Danielson: Job creation incentives typically come in the form of state grants. For example, Tazewell offers meals tax assistance to businesses that create at least three FTE jobs.

Craig Earls: Would the IEDA recommend incentives and boundaries to the Town Council?

Tim Danielson: Yes. Town Council makes the final determination on both.

Craig Earls: Can Enterprise Zones overlap with Technology Zones?

Tim Danielson: Yes, the two can overlap.

### **Next Steps:**

The group agreed to review potential boundary adjustments and incentive options. Members will come prepared to make formal recommendations to the Town Manager.

### **Economic Development Updates:**

Joseph Vance reported that he reached out to Senator Travis Hackworth regarding the \$250,000 budget amendment intended to support hurricane and flood recovery efforts. The amendment is currently still under review by the Governor.

Susan Whitt noted that the Town has received a federal emergency declaration related to the recent flooding. Given the extent of the damage, the Town will now be eligible to apply for federal assistance.

Craig Earls shared that he conducted AI-assisted research on available grant opportunities. He noted that many of the potential grants require a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation. He recommended that town staff review the list of opportunities for possible alignment with the Town's needs.

**Additional Discussion:**

Susan Whitt advised that Kiesha Cole (Economic Development) and Dedra Harris (Grants/Events Coordinator) are no longer with the town due to budget cuts.

Craig Earls made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lynna Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: May 5th, at 6 p.m.