

Town of Richlands
Industrial/Economic Development Authority
September 8, 2025

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

Lynna Mitchell	Cody Harman
Craig Earls	Joseph Vance
Mike Bales	

Members Absent: Jeff Casey
Town Representatives: Ron Holt
Guests:

Call to Order:

Joseph Vance called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda:

Lynna Mitchell made a motion to approve the agenda. Craig Earls seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of the August 11th meeting were presented for approval. Lynna Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes. Mike Bales seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the minutes were unanimously approved.

IEDA Discussion Items:

Town Council Requests

Joseph Vance stated that the IEDA is recommending Raubi Elswick for appointment. He noted that Raubi was the only individual who submitted an expression of interest in joining the Authority. The recommendation will be reviewed during the next Town Council meeting.

He added that the Town Council will review the submission on September 23rd for consideration and approval, should the Council wish to move forward with the appointment.

Richlands Enterprise Zone Designation Updates

During our last meeting, the following potential incentive recommendations were discussed:

- Develop marketing and promotional materials
- Waive tap fees for electric, sewer, and water
- Offer real estate/property tax assistance
- Implement a lodging tax rebate
- Explore meals tax incentives based on year-over-year growth and job creation

Lodging Tax Incentive (LTR)

Ron Holt proposed that all submissions for the lodging tax rebate be submitted within a defined period, ideally within 30 days of the deadline (for example, submitted by February 1 for a March 1 payment). The group discussed and also recommended requiring three full-time equivalent (FTE) employees for eligibility, with the following structure:

- Single-unit short-term rentals: Minimum of 1 FTE
- Multi-unit co-located short-term rentals: Minimum of 3 FTEs

The group discussed and recommended adopting this incentive.

Business License Fee Abatement (BLFA)

Lynna Mitchell recommended removing the "Project Jonah" language from the existing BLFA incentive. She also proposed adjusting the FTE requirement from 10 FTEs to 5 FTEs, which the group agreed was more appropriate.

The group recommended updating the BLFA incentive accordingly.

Meals Tax Rebate (MTR)

Craig Earls supported including the meals tax rebate incentive, referencing examples from Tazewell County. The group discussed and recommended adjusting the FTE requirement from 5 FTEs to 3 FTEs to align with local business capacity.

Rehabilitated Real Estate Tax Exemption (RRTE)

The group agreed to recommend adoption and maintain the existing RRTE incentive but with the following suggested updates:

- Remove references to fire and flood-specific language.
- Eliminate references to Bluefield and Tazewell areas to localize the language for Richlands.

The consensus of the IEDA is to propose these Enterprise Zone incentive code changes to Town Council for reading at the September 23rd meeting. Our Town Attorney, Mike Thomas, can make the changes to Code Section 110.50 A/B/C to add these incentives.

Other Business Discussion

Cody Harman asked whether the Town receives income from trailer courts.

Ron Holt confirmed that the Town collects revenue through gross receipts, real property taxes, and mobile home taxes associated with those properties.

Food Truck Festival

Cody Harman suggested organizing a Food Truck Festival to promote the Town and attract visitors. He noted that Richlands has several excellent food trucks and proposed inviting around 50 vendors to participate, emphasizing that such an event could generate significant local business activity.

Ron Holt recommended sharing this idea with Jan White, who leads the Town Events Committee, for further consideration and planning.

Cody Harman added that incorporating a barbecue competition could enhance the event's appeal and increase revenue opportunities through entry fees. He described it as a fun and competitive way to draw larger crowds.

Ron Holt agreed that it was an excellent idea and encouraged submitting it formally to the Events Committee.

Joseph Vance noted that events like this align with the IEDA's mission to bring new businesses and visitors into the community.

Mike Bales mentioned that some towns have designated areas specifically for food trucks, which helps with organization and presentation. He suggested that Richlands could explore establishing such an area and possibly require vendors to obtain a business license.

Ron Holt concluded by sharing that the Town is seeking a grant to renovate the Farmers Market into a Town Commons, which could serve as a suitable venue for future community events such as the Food Truck Festival.

The IEDA members discussed the proposal and agreed that it would be an excellent opportunity for the Events Committee to consider future implementation.

Action Items:

Craig Earls will prepare a summary of the proposed Enterprise Zone incentive recommendations and forward it to the Town Attorney for review.

Additional Discussion: Old Richlands Mall Property Discussion

Ron Holt reported that there is renewed interest in the old mall property. The property owner has re-engaged and expressed a willingness to pursue potential redevelopment opportunities. Ron recently met with the owner, who indicated interest in creating senior efficiency units and exploring other mixed-use possibilities for the site.

Ron suggested arranging a joint meeting with the Chairman of the IEDA, the Planning Commission, and representatives from the hospital to discuss potential partnerships and development options. The group was at a consensus that this opportunity should be explored further.

Craig Earls asked Lynna Mitchell if there were any available grant programs that could support such a project.

Lynna Mitchell confirmed that there are potential grant opportunities for this type of development.

Ron Holt emphasized that this would be an excellent opportunity for the IEDA to apply for grant funding in support of the project.

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

Next meeting October 6th, 2025, 6:00PM