

NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
7:00 A.M.
Business Resource Center

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Chairman Dean Sides, Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Hiro Kado, Nyasha Greer, Lee Scoggins, and Benjy Harris.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Typhanie Myers, Scott Foushee, and Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner.

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 Jackson County Sherrif Russell Brinsfield.

OPEN MEETING

Chairman Dean Sides opened the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to accept the minutes from November, with a second by Benjy Harris, motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for November. Director Chadwell presented the sales tax and obligations. Sales tax for 2025 is up \$2,400 to date. \$5,000 for Club Restore was for the Jackson County Community Garden. Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to accept the financial statements for November with a second from Lee Scoggins, motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- IEDC Exam Grading, Zoom
- Brent Lassiter, Gen4Jets
- Grandon Gray, P3 Group
- Justin Foshee
- Jason Skelton, Skelton Electric
- Clinton School Field Service Department
- Amendment Discussion

DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT

- Shop Til You Drop
- Festival of Trees

- New Vision Newport at Unity Health
- Urban Grid Solar
- 75Strong Training
- Christmas Parade, December 11
- ESO Summit

RENEWPORT GRANTS

None currently.

SITE CONSULTANT EVENT PARTICIPATION

Arkansas Economic Development is hosting a Site Selection Consultation Event on April 1 through April 3. The first eight communities to sponsor the event will get one-on-one time with site selection consultants. Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion for Director Jon Chadwell to attend the meeting as long as the \$2,000 was transferred from another area in the budget with a second by Nyesha Greer, motion carried.

INDUSTRIAL APPRECIATION EVENT

A discussion was held to host an Industrial Appreciation Event such as a fish fry for Industrial Appreciation week. Invitations for the local industries and state officials would be sent.

NEWPORT RACEWAY PROPERTY

The Newport Economic Development Commission owns 33 acres at the Newport Raceway Property. The property was purchased in 2020. The state is no longer allowing drag strips to be built. Newport Raceway has inquired into the willingness of the NEDC to sell 16.6 acres of the site. The Commission would be open to that possibility.

NEW WEBSITE 2026

Due to new legislation the City of Newport, Newport Economic Development Commission, Newport Area Chamber of Commerce and the Jackson County Courthouse will need a new website. The domain will need to end in .gov vs .org. Everyone will need new email addresses as well. To date 13 RFP's have been submitted. The deadline is December 15 for the RFP's and the selection will be made in January.

INDUSTRIAL GREENHOUSE PROPERTY UPDATE

The Industrial Greenhouse property is appraised at \$519, 000 in its current condition. Director Chadwell has two interested parties and will follow up with the prospective buyer today and gauge their interest.

DIAZ REFINERY PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Diaz Refinery agreed upon sale price is \$80,000 but will require quiet title insurance. The refinery will be cleaned up once ownership and liability matters are resolved.

INDUSTRIAL SITE INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

Hawkeye Enterprises has completed the paving of Comet Drive, significantly improving accessibility and enhancing the marketability of the industrial site. This roadway is essential for prospective clients to

access and view the certified site, making the completion of this project an important milestone in our development efforts. Entergy is working on expanding gas capacity to the airbase.

THIRD AND LAUREL PARKING LOT UPDATE

The issues regarding the parking lot project at Third and Laurel have been resolved. The Arkansas Department of Transportation requested several modifications to the original plans, and those adjustments will be incorporated accordingly to ensure the project moves forward smoothly.

75 STRONG

Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, and Christel attended the 75 Strong session in Conway on December 2. The team is now one year into the two-year program. They are scheduled to participate in the ESO Summit in February, with the program exam set for November.

TECH DEPOT UPDATE

Tech Depot recorded strong engagement throughout 2025, with 2,031 unique attendees and a total daily attendance count of 6,312, averaging 24 participants per day. The center delivered 1,359.5 hours of instruction, averaging 5.23 instructional hours per day. Attendance demographics included 725 Black participants, 1,253 White participants, and 50 Hispanic participants, with 1,089 men and 926 women served. An estimated 433 attendees were from low to moderate income households, reflecting Tech Depot's continued commitment to accessible workforce development. Additionally, Tech Depot will host a community blood drive with the American Red Cross on 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 handicap assessable elevator, interior painting, and concrete work being completed on-site today.

NEW SUBDIVISION UPDATE

The Newport School District is moving forward with a new subdivision near the school district. However, the school board is looking at a different developer to build the project.

DETERIORATING PROPERTY OPTIONS

Mayor Derrick Ratliffe has identified three properties scheduled for demolition, with additional consideration being given to removing two former nursing home facilities located on Cherokee Street and Calhoun Street. Funding opportunities are being explored, including a potential grant that may assist with the demolition of the two nursing home structures.

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 having the Drive-Thru installation this week.

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.

PROSPECT GIT ALONG

Prospect Git Along is being developed by Dwight Davis and James Thomas. They currently make three products. The prospect employs five people, and they are requesting some marketing and technical assistance.

RETENTION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lee Scoggins inquired about the actions taken to retain Jon Chadwell as the Executive Director for the Newport Economic Development Commission. Jon Chadwell shared with the Commission that he had been offered a contract with El Dorado, Arkansas as Director of Economic Development and that the offer had been significantly higher than his current compensation. Dean Sides informed the group that upon learning of the El Dorado offer, several private individuals were approached about donating funds to assist in creating a competitive offer to retain Jon Chadwell as the executive director. The funds were secured and Jon Chadwell has signed an agreement with the private group to stay as the executive director for a minimum of five more years.

ADJOURNED

Lee Scoggins made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Jim Gowen Sr., meeting adjourned.