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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Economic Initiatives Committee, Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Date	Tuesday, March 12, 2024
Place	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length	1h 14m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/3279
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-01. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:05] Hey, folks. We're going to go ahead and get started. The Economic Initiatives Committee meeting will come to order, and I wanted to, first and foremost, acknowledge the big shoes. I don't actually know how big his feet were, but I have big feet, so maybe I can fill those shoes, but we know that Supervisor Faust did a great job. I think most of us, I didn't really know some of this until I started kind of putting things together for the meeting, but we've got a great legacy of 16 years of focusing on the economic development of the

[00:00:43] county. He not only shepherded economic development, he really led the vision for economic development in 2008 when he got on the board and he got this opportunity. So I really absolutely want to acknowledge the years that he spent cultivating and developing and nurturing, if you will, this committee. And I've talked to him many times, actually, since he quote-unquote retired. And we've had a lot of conversations about what his vision was, where he thought we went, and then what he thought we should be considering for the future. So try to incorporate

[00:01:20] some of that into the conversations that we'll have a little bit later today. So again, thank you, Supervisor Faust. Also, Chairman McKay and his work with the particularly EAC portions of this a little bit later in the committee was, I think, instrumental in some of the things that we brought forward. Had a lot of conversation with County Executive Brian Hill, of course, the County Executive, the Deputy County

Executive Rachel Flynn, and Rebecca Modere, the Director of the Department. So we've got a lot of things I want to try to get to. The first thing, though, is to approve the summary of the meeting from December 12, 2023, and just see if there's any questions,

[00:02:00] comments or changes to that meeting summary. And were there any follow-ups that needed to be addressed that weren't addressed? Not seeing or hearing anything. We're now going to go to the next part, the first agenda, really the first formal agenda item is this is an incredibly exciting day for the Department of Economic Initiatives. Today we are launching CORE, Fairfax CORE, C-O-R-E. It's a new portal providing information and support to entrepreneurs and business owners of all ages, which truly is the essence of, I think, what Fairfax County is.

[00:02:38] In addition to the step-by-step guidance on everything from business planning to funding capital or securing permits, Fairfax Corps can connect entrepreneurs directly to the best source of support for their specific needs. It is a searchable resource navigator, includes more than 115 organizations that provide free, and I underline the word free, particularly as an That word free is powerful and something that we're all very, very conscious of.

[00:03:05] Free sources of counseling, support, education, and even events that they can connect with not only for Fairfax County, but also the towns of Clifton, Herndon, Vienna, the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. I think the Board of Supervisors was recently invited to learn more about Fairfax Corps, and we're going to learn a lot more today about Fairfax Corps.

[00:03:26] And I'm going to turn it over to Megan Kiefer and ask her to walk us through it. Oh, the video. Right. Fairfax Core, the go-to resource to connect aspiring entrepreneurs and business owners with experts to start and grow businesses in Fairfax County.

[00:03:45] Starting a business can be really exciting, but can also be confusing. Fairfax Core does the legwork for you, bringing together information and resources into one place, including business startup guys to get you started and growth guys to keep you going in the right direction. Mason Small Business Development Center is proud to be a resource partner featured on Fairfax Core.

[00:04:04] Our business counselors are ready to work one-on-one with entrepreneurs to help them get through the next step on their journey. From business planning to access to capital to workshops and training, find us on Fairfax Core. Women-owned businesses are on the rise, and women in underserved communities often require unique support to overcome barriers to starting a business.

[00:04:25] The Fairfax Core Resource Navigator allows entrepreneurs and business owners to identify and connect with the organizations that are here to support them. You will find more than 100 free business support organizations segmented by your unique needs that are eager to help.

[00:04:41] Find the Women's Business Center of Northern Virginia on Fairfax Core. We support entrepreneurship efforts for all businesses, focusing on the conceptual through year two stage for women, low income and underserved communities. From emerging entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, micro businesses and evolving establishments, Fairfax Core will help you connect with the right network.

[00:05:03] Whether you're located in Fairfax County, including the towns of Clifton, Herndon, Vienna, or Fairfax City, in a commercial location or home-based, learn how the local economic development organizations can help you. And if you are opening a business in your home, learn about the individual requirements to do things right the first time.

[00:05:25] We offer dedicated courses and assistance for every stage of business in every location across Fairfax County. Fairfax Corps features dozens of upcoming events, activities, networking opportunities, and education links for you to connect, learn, and grow.

[00:05:44] Find us on Fairfax Corps. The Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation is one of many organizations in Fairfax County that's dedicated to supporting small businesses. And we also include a focus on community revitalization. Helping new businesses and assisting growing businesses is a key component to our work.

[00:06:05] We offer support to find the right site, understand development opportunities, and create vibrant commercial districts that attract visitors and shoppers. Find us on Fairfax Corp to learn about the unique opportunities along the Richmond Highway Corridor. Obtaining credit and managing finances is one of the most important questions entrepreneurs have.

[00:06:27] The Financial Empowerment Center helps entrepreneurs during the early stages of their journey. Find us at Fairfax Corp to receive one-on-one coaching to guide you through the complexities and challenges of creating a business.

[00:06:45] We can help with business planning, setting goals, and growth strategies to help you for the long-term success. Y ofrecemos servicios en español, and we provide services in many languages. Additionally, when you visit Fairfax Core, you can use the Translate button to immediately translate all the Core content to the language of your choice.

[00:07:12] Encuéntranos en Fairfax Core. Find us on Fairfax Core. Fairfax Core will help you connect. Find us on Fairfax Core. Find us on Fairfax Core. Fairfax CORE. Check us out on fairfaxcore.com. Very well done.

[00:07:33] And I can't help but think of CORE, and I think of the physical CORE of your body. And they talk about strengthening your CORE. And so that's a way that I'm going to use to try to remember the CORE name, C-O-R-E. So with that, again, Megan, thank you. Great.

[00:07:49] Thank you very much. And I wanted to thank Channel 16 for putting that amazing video together and spotlighting the businesses and the resources in Fairfax County. So in just a minute, we're very excited to launch Fairfax Corps. But before we do that, I wanted to take a moment just to recognize the Fairfax Corps advocacy team. We had representation from the Women's Business Center of Northern Virginia, the South County Financial Empowerment Center, the Mason Small Business Development Center, the Town of Vienna, the City of Fairfax, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, and the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation.

[00:08:24] The advocacy team has worked closely with us since December of 2022 to help shape the brand, find content, and help us connect with resource partners. We appreciate their help, and we look forward to future collaboration.

[00:08:40] Also want to take a moment to thank everybody in DEI. This has predominantly been a project of the Small and Local Business Development Division, But this is one of those instances where literally every member of our team was involved in this, and so I'm grateful for that as well. In just a moment, Fairfax Corps is going to be accessible to the public, and they will be able to find information for their specific need and for their unique stage.

[00:09:07] And if they can't, there are lots of opportunities to connect with us directly through Fairfax Corps, and we're looking for that feedback, right? we are still creating content and we would like to know what additional information would be helpful. Entrepreneurship support entities that have not yet joined Fairfax Core can do so through the portal. It's free, free to join. And you can see this contact information here. And also to promote their activities and education events on our Fairfax Core calendar. Finally, we are actively seeking opportunities to bring Fairfax Core into the community, so business events for

[00:09:46] entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship development, and business development professionals, if there are upcoming events and they would be interested in a presentation about Fairfax Core, they can email us at info at fairfaxcore.com. Chairman Stork, I'm going to turn it back over to you.

[00:10:06] Well, I think this is our opportunity for all of us to ask questions, and I have a few just to start with how have you promoted this what what is being done to kind of get the word out because that's we know that our number one challenge is how do we kind of get that information in front of people who need it the most yeah so you should have in front of you some promotional materials and we have a press release going out later today we have worked with all of our resource partners to get information out through the community through the chambers of

[00:10:39] Commerce through the 115-ish resource partners that exist, and we are working with OPA to integrate Fairfax Corps into the county platform and promotional materials. Can I just add one of our next steps? Of course, we will be doing a lot of tracking.

[00:11:00] Sorry, by the way, Rebecca Mowdry, a director of the Department of Economic Initiatives. So we're going to be doing a lot of tracking and understand, you know, who's visiting site numbers. And we have talked about some next steps for search engine optimization for ongoing, you know, web reviews.

[00:11:17] Excellent. Thank you. Chairman, did you want to make any comments? Yeah, a couple questions. First, I appreciate all the work that's been put into this. It's obviously been a lot. I guess one of the questions I have, some of the events that are in here, there's a fee for them, but most of them are free. So I'm just wondering, you know, how we determine that, where the revenue goes for the events that there's a fee associated with.

[00:11:47] Chairman McKay, those are events that are hosted by our resource partners. The Women's Business Center does charge a nominal fee for some of their events, as is typical for a lot of our partners. The vast majority of the events that you're going to find on our calendar are free, but some that are more labor-intensive, such as teaching QuickBooks and those kinds of things, there is a fee associated, and that goes directly to the organization that is promoting the event, hosting the event.

[00:12:16] So I think just, I didn't drill down in detail on it, but I think we should make sure people understand that, that these are county partners but not county-run symposiums and different things that are in there, and just whatever the legal, you know, terms that need to be in there for that is just one minor comment.

[00:12:37] I guess the larger comment is, and I appreciate, you know, there's a lot of advice here, a lot of things for people to do with marketing, growth, all those kind of things, but in here also are links to some of your county responsibilities, including permits, and when I click on the permits one, and I think people know how I feel about this, I think we make it way too hard for people to get permits and get through our process, and when I click on the permits thing it circles me back to the county department that handles

permits but it doesn't tell me anything about what support I might get who I should talk to if I'm having a problem I I love

[00:13:17] this expansion and building up and support systems for all of our businesses including a lot of things that are kind of outside of the typical local government travel lane but I'm still really worried that some of the fundamentals within the county in terms of helping them get through our own process is, and I'm not sure how much of this is supposed to be helpful on that front versus how much of is it supposed to be helpful in linking people up with our outside agencies and partners to help them with some kind of fundamental business practices where they're the experts in.

[00:13:53] So help me understand if I am a business coming here from an existing one and I'm having trouble getting through the county process and I discover this Fairfax County core, what am I expecting to get out of it in terms of a strong handhold to help me through our own process or are we just referring them to the permits office so we hope that what this provides is an overview of the requirements and the resources that are available it is by design you know a mile wide and a couple of inches deep we did not want to recreate all of the county content that we find

[00:14:32] that recreating content leads to confusion. The permitting agencies that provide support are listed in the resource navigator. So if somebody went into that searchable database, they would be able to connect with the customer engagement team in LDS, for example.

[00:14:52] And certainly, we have direct connect to Fairfax Core. So if somebody were to email us and say, hey, I'm having a challenge, we would make sure to get them directly to the best person to support them. Can I just add one item? We're really excited to launch this.

[00:15:09] One of the challenges that we hear all the time from entrepreneurs and small businesses is, I didn't know where to start. I didn't know where to go. I went here, and then it took me here. So we're really excited about this kind of compendium of resources, and kind of the motto of Fairfax Core is to help entrepreneurs find the right resources at the right time.

[00:15:30] So we really consider this the opportunity for that. That said, we are launching today. We are going to learn a lot over the next couple of months. And as Megan said, you know, there is a kind of contact as we anticipate that many entrepreneurs will say, I just, you know, I have, this is my question.

[00:15:53] And as we learn, as we gather feedback, as we hear from our resource partners, and we are one of the great things about this, is we have now, over the last year, built really great relationships, not only with the advocacy team, but, you know, dozens, over 100 resource partners, and have those relationships now to understand what they're learning as they receive referrals from Fairfax Corps.

[00:16:18] Through all of that, we anticipate continuing to build the content, refine the content, even look at the structure, and among those resource partners are our own county agencies, and so we anticipate an opportunity to also provide feedback and learning about how we can all do things better.

[00:16:38] Okay, I appreciate that. And on the contact part, I think you are going to hear all kinds of things. And I just want to make sure that, you know, if we refer somebody out to a subject matter expert that's outside of county government, you know, we really can't control what happens after that.

[00:16:54] If we're referring them to somebody in county government that they need help with, we need to think through how we handhold them through that process because we own that. And I just want to

make sure for people who need help with the county that we're making sure they get help with the county all the way through the process and they're not just getting handed off or else the core will lose credibility in the business community.

[00:17:18] If they come here, they try to get help, they get handed off somewhere, they get handed somewhere else, and they never get what they need. So I do think within the county, we have a special responsibility for helping those folks navigate within our system. And I'm not saying that's on your office. I'm just saying I think as a county, we need to figure out how to make sure that that happens so that people don't get dropped in the process once they submit, you know, one of their questions or concerns to the platform.

[00:17:45] Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll start with Supervisor Palcic. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Megan. Thank you, Rebecca, for this work. And I think just a little bit following up where the chairman was, this seems like a good place to start, right? And I think that's a little bit of what you're sharing. And you'll gather a lot more feedback. A lot of what we keep hearing is not only is it difficult to know where to start, right, but the challenges of navigating sometimes remind me a little bit of how we've set up through our human services system, right, with those partners, a lot of it nonprofits that are, I know you have Navigator on here,

[00:18:23] but are really helping navigate through all the different agencies and supports. So I don't, and the need of time and understanding for a small business owner that has so much that they're trying to handle, how to be able to navigate. So I guess my question is, following up on this sort of instrument, are we looking and considering ways to maybe leverage one of our partners?

[00:18:49] And it might not be internal, but maybe one of those external agencies and nonprofits that we're already working with to do the grants and loans and other supports to maybe consider a navigator program so there are people able to do that and what the costs would be. I'll start. We've talked about a lot of different models. One of the benefits of Fairfax Corps, we hope, is that it will help entrepreneurs find the information they need. In a lot of cases, the county is not the best source of the information for the

[00:19:24] questions that they have, right? But as you all know, once people find someone that they believe to be a credible source, they ask all sorts of questions. And so, you know, we hope that this will provide the opportunity for people to connect with the best source of information.

[00:19:41] In a lot of cases, we think that's going to be the Small Business Development Center to help people just understand the things that they need to be doing and making the best choices for their situation. That should free us up in the county to focus on the things that are our responsibility, the things that we can control. You know, I, for about five years, was operating BizX, and I can tell you the kinds of questions that people asked me that, you know, we're not really qualified to answer, and it's not the county's place to answer. So if we can get those

[00:20:17] questions to the right source that will give us the opportunity to rethink how we do what we do and so we haven't done any costing we haven't figured that out yet we're in a very very much a learning phase but we do think we'll have some capacity to rethink the services that we provide well i was just gonna actually i'll just reiterate one thing that megan mentioned which is we actually have a pretty great system in the county now i would say through our county partners and the

[00:20:51] Mason Small Business Development Center in some ways is kind of that navigator. And so they are often, if we get kind of general questions, they are a great first stop. And so we are often referring folks to them and they are, you know, one of our core partners. They are often a first stop for businesses or entrepreneurs that are really looking to start out and need that that help navigating, but there are specialists in the county that we do not want to be overlooked by entrepreneurs, and they are listed now in Fairfax Corps. They're easy to find,

[00:21:31] and so it really provides kind of a platter of options and opportunities to entrepreneurs. I was going to make the very same point, one-stop shop. I like the idea that there's a place that people can go and get access to the services that they need.

[00:21:52] And when you think about entrepreneurs, they are struggling with writing a business plan, doing a marketing plan, doing an investment plan. They're struggling finding access to capital. That's the hardest thing. We know that specifically from companies. So being able to have a place to go and to get kind of those services outlined in a quick and easy way, I think is going to be tremendous.

[00:22:16] I also would say this is a differentiator and helps us be more competitive as it relates to even other places in the region because we know we are competing with other jurisdictions who are looking to provide differentiated services, and this is one I think that will help us be competitive.

[00:22:37] The one question I wanted to ask is in terms of metrics, What types of metrics do we intend to collect on those who are participating in the program? What do we expect at least to be looking at as we work with the companies?

[00:22:54] So in the early stages, we know we can collect the number of visitors to the site, where they go, what they look at, which paths they take once they come in, who they decide to connect with. So when they use the resource navigator, we can tell the searches that they do.

[00:23:11] And then there's the functionality to connect directly with the organization through Fairfax Corps. So when they do that, we will then have information to go to the Corps resource partners and say, you know, 26 entities connected with you.

[00:23:27] Can you tell us what you did, what happened with those connections? We will also intend to do some surveying of both the resource partners and the people who come through Fairfax Corps, people who sign up for our newsletter.

[00:23:44] You came, did you find what you were looking for, what would have been useful to you if you didn't find it? There is a lot of functionality that we will explore once we have some use of the system. As a follow-up, Mr. Chairman, just thinking out loud, it seems like it could be valuable to, you know, collect information on those that get financing, those that get funding.

[00:24:09] I mean, there's multiple ways you can do this, through debt or equity, but just having a basis of kind of if we refer through CORE to access funds and that was secured, it might be helpful for us to keep a record of that.

[00:24:25] And then I'd say just information about the types of individuals, women, minority, veteran-owned, having that type of data might also be interesting. But thank you. Thank you.

[00:24:41] Thank you, Mr. -- and then . Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And putting up a website is no joke. It's very difficult, and it's a huge undertaking. So congratulations to you and staff. I'm sure you'll learn a lot.

[00:24:57] Just putting -- getting it out there is a massive, huge first step. So I want to commend you on not only putting this -- pushing this out, but also putting this all in a single location, as Mr. Luss kind of mentioned and alluded to. I have one question, but before that, I do want to say that one of the great things about this endeavor is that you'll be able to really help, hopefully, help those who historically have been disenfranchised and haven't had these opportunities, and so it really fits well with Chairman McKay and Fairfax County's one Fairfax model, so I applaud you for that.

[00:25:32] My quick question was, the video that we saw, an awesome job by Channel 16, but who is that intended audience? How are you pushing that video out? Well, we wanted to share it with you today, and we have shared it with all of our resource partners.

[00:25:50] It will be on our website, and we anticipate creating another series of videos, including for people how to use the site, and those will live on the Fairfax Core site. If at any point you make, like, even a shorter snippet of this video, I think it could be something these supervisors could possibly put up on their website to help push out and draw people more to the site.

[00:26:17] Great. Yeah, a quick question. Sorry I was a little bit late. Are the other partners going to be pushing CORE, too, or is this going to be kind of county-owned, or are each of the other groups going to be pushing this?

[00:26:35] It's owned by the county. We maintain the content, but our partners are eligible to link to it, and we hope that they will. We've asked them to. We think they will. Yeah, I was going to say, I think if it's going to be successful, it needs to have people coming in from all directions.

[00:26:53] I'll go back to, you know, as Rodney said, most entrepreneurs don't have business backgrounds. Most of them are engineers or marketers or whatever. So I think that the fact that we have this is very helpful for people that don't do this all the time.

[00:27:11] And it is really difficult to navigate when you don't do it all the time. And I think it's refreshing what you said, that we don't have all the answers here. And we've got partners that can help people get answers internal and out. I will go back to something that the chairman said at the beginning about improving our processes.

[00:27:30] I think one of the things that needs to be a piece of this, if it's going to be successful for us, is the feedback loop into how we can improve our own processes. So it's, and I don't know how that's included, if it's included, and I'm sure, because we've talked here and there, but you've probably got a bunch of ideas coming out of BizX and your experience with BizX, but how do we get that, you know, where are people struggling, Where are our customers struggling and how do we get that feedback back into the appropriate agency?

[00:28:03] I think that should be a big piece of this because the fewer and fewer people that have to go through this, the better. I was going to mention one other thing, but I'm happy to respond to that as well, just because the last two comments included note on how we're going to market.

[00:28:27] And just so you know, we do have a marketing page up that includes all the details that someone would need to push it out on social media, add snippets to your website, and your offices will be receiving that collateral right after this meeting, as well as our resource partners.

[00:28:45] And we, as I mentioned, part of this effort is to really build the entrepreneurship and small business development community and create connections among this community. Every time we get together with this group, we see connections being made. People and organizations that did not know each other or know the details of what each other, you know, the services that one another provided previously.

[00:29:08] So that is part of this. So all of those groups as well will receive the marketing collateral, and we're going to continue to meet with them and bring this community together to hopefully continue to build. And Megan mentioned, you know, her work in BizX, and there was learning from there.

[00:29:24] We think we're going to have even more learning. You know, this is an even more efficient and powerful way to provide information and services and resources to entrepreneurs and small businesses. And we think there's going to be even more volume over time, and we will have even more learning.

[00:29:42] And we have great connections with our county partners, and we will have those conversations. And happy to talk with you all as well about what we learn and maybe opportunities to even enhance our own programs and services. Chairman, just real quickly, I hope I appreciate that, and we don't want to overlook what we have in the way of county data. I mean, we know who has applied for a business license. We know who is a new BPOL taxpayer. We know who has applied for a fit-up for a new business. We have all that information, and so I'm hoping there's some way

[00:30:21] to interface either with DTA, with the permits office, where we can push out, hey, we know you're a new business because you entered our door somewhere in the county, either to get a permit, a license, file a BPOL tax, whatever it is.

[00:30:38] We know if you're new and you've come here, we should know that better than anyone, right? So I'm hoping that we can look at, maybe you go back and look at what those points are where you're having a new person come into the county where instead of waiting for them to find you, we can push out information to them because we know their address. In some cases, we have their contact information. And so I just don't want us to overlook the information that we already collect in other agencies about new businesses coming in and using those tools to try to push out information about the core platform. Thank you. Other colleagues? I wanted

[00:31:18] to add on to that point. During COVID, we actually did that on the Richmond Highway Corridor. We did postcards and pushouts and we got DTA has a wealth of information and I would strongly urge that you your communication plan to start with literally pushes out I mean traditional means of a postcard but a fancy postcard that maybe makes them aware but also there's far more folks than even that that and then the other part of it which again I'm probably stating the obvious but I want to make sure that we have chambers of commerces that I know do we have a business breakfast in fact on Thursdays the next one for the Mount Vernon Springfield one

[00:31:57] but all of them have some vehicles like that whether virtual or in person and and we're more than happy I mean our office is more than happy to to be involved and support that and offer ideas suggestions for doing that but I think the next six months are critical and getting the branding this branding out and getting the kind of getting us in the front end of that wave that that people actually might utilize for further, okay?

[00:32:28] Well, thank you very much, and I know that I want to come back in about six months or so and hear a follow-up presentation on what data you've gotten and how you've pushed it out and what kind of, you know, how people have adapted and utilized it, because I think that will help us understand if we're truly making, really, the mark that we wanted to make with this, and I deeply support what we're trying to do, so thank you.

[00:32:54] Thank you. in six months. The next order of business is to talk about our Economic Advisory Commission, and I'm going to spend a little bit more time than I normally would just to kind of give a little bit of history and make sure people have context for what we've been doing with our Economic Advisory Commission. Again, for some, the background is that in 1992, amidst a severe recession in Favros County, the Economic Advisory Commission, the EAC, emerged as a vehicle for

[00:33:29] navigating economic challenges within our community. Later in 2008, Supervisor Faust's reconstitution, he brought that as a board matter of the EAC, aimed to bolster our commercial tax base to a minimum of 25 percent, one of our key challenges that we're obviously still struggling and not anywhere close to. Since then, though, the EAC has evolved to serving as a vital advisory body during periods of economic prosperity as well as during periods of crisis such as COVID-19 this pandemic where it clearly was crucial in facilitating a number of supports for our small

[00:34:04] business and I know Rebecca DEI folks can talk a little bit about the some of the key recommendations that came out of that but but just to give you context they were very involved not only as a subgroup but also ultimately as an overall group of the AAC working with us on how do we address the pandemic in a way that saves businesses, which we did, but also moves us forward. Fairfax County has benefited from the reliance on commercial office space, and we know that that is changing really across the area. Now, that's not to say it still won't be a critical part of what we do, but we know that we have to be looking at other options. And so as we look into the future,

[00:34:42] we have to figure out other really proactive ways of gathering business intelligence and adapting to new opportunities that are coming our way. This requires not only the current efforts that we're maintaining, but also pursuing opportunities in emerging industries and economic sectors that really and truly leverage our community's strengths and our values. The economic environment, again, has changed dramatically, and we're hoping that through this process of looking at the EAC, our committee structure, not only this one, but other committee structures that the vice chair has been tasked to do, but ensuring its alignment with current and future economic imperatives.

[00:35:21] We currently have two groups, the Economic Advisory Commission and the Economic Initiatives Committee. The EAC has been more the board and staff kind of focus committee, more of an, I would say more of an internal focus, even though we do a lot of external things that the board is supporting. But also we have then the EAC, which is, I see, has been broader based and intended to bring in industry and really help us to look outward and connect more with what's happening in the broader community. So in looking how the EAC should be moving forward, I kind of want to

[00:35:58] keep those things broadly in mind, but also recognize that this is a new day, a new board, and how do we, you know, capture the future and actually take advantage of the changes which are happening. So being adaptable and proactive are key parts of that. I think my perspective particularly is providing a platform for industry leaders to share their insights and strategies, is an essential part of how we kind of identify with these emerging trends, as well as to plan to make sure that we are adapting to and looking

and securing the opportunities to ensure that we truly are a resilient and truly have a resilient economic future.

[00:36:37] I've had numerous conversations, starting with the chairman and the county executive and our deputy county executive, clearly with our director, Rebecca Madre, also with colleagues such as our executive director of the EDA, Victor Hoskins.

[00:36:57] And so I've asked Mr. Hoskins to come, and if you could come up here, sir, and to just give his own kind of thoughts about the EDA and its role in relation to DEI, or Department of Economics Initiative, but even more importantly, how they've worked with the EAC over the last few years and what he sees as opportunities.

[00:37:18] And I want to have him do that all within about five minutes. Welcome. Thank you so much, Supervisor Stork. And Mr. Chairman, Board of Supervisors, County Executive, staff, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

[00:37:34] I want to begin by talking about a little history. I have to say that, you know, I really appreciated the vision that the county had to create the DEI because I think it saved thousands of businesses during COVID. And I'm not saying that glibly.

[00:37:50] It definitely saved thousands of businesses during COVID. And the businesses that it saved are the ones that we are most concerned about, which are the small minority, veteran, women-owned businesses. If you look at the statistics, I mean, almost 6,000, you know, organizations, companies were helped, arts organizations, nonprofits, for-profits, and the funding that was made available really helped get them across a bridge. And that was phenomenal. And we did that in total cooperation with DEI.

[00:38:19] We helped them market the program. We got it to places that they probably wouldn't have gotten to before. And then with the muscle of the county sending direct mails to businesses, I think it made a huge difference. And so I want to thank you for that. And all jurisdictions didn't see that vision. All didn't have that understanding or that forethought. And that $72 million that rolled out to all those companies really made a big difference. And if you look at the numbers, you can see it. Pre-COVID, we had 36,000 payroll businesses. And right now we have 43,000 payroll businesses. That means more companies paying payroll to people. We have the largest workforce

[00:38:56] we've ever had in history. We have a 71% labor force participation rate. That's the envy of the country. The country's at 61%. The state's at 66%. We're at 71%. So hands down, you look at the numbers, it just says it. The challenge that we have, and this is DEI, this is us, this is all the organizations that are in CORE. By the way, we're working very closely with CORE. There are 148,000 businesses in the county, and 93% of them have less than 50 employees. That's the challenge.

[00:39:27] It's just literally the math of getting to that many businesses. We use technology for that, And obviously, you know, DEI is using technology. The county uses technology for that. But because of the changes in what's going on in the landscape of business growth, it really has made a big difference in how we reach these folks.

[00:39:46] So we have been using something, again, the county saw fit to provide funding for our talent initiative. We've been running it for about four and a half years. It went from just concentrating on people that were in career, career switchers, to now universities, to now K through 12. We helped almost 6,000 veterans get hired in Northern Virginia at our companies last year.

[00:40:07] So the numbers, again, are showing, and it is so important. But we've been using that as a door to get to companies. We actually now can reach the 17,000 companies through that door. We couldn't do that before. So I think that the key is that the complementary services that we have here, I would say that most economies are set up this way, where you have a trade economy that's bringing in money from the outside.

[00:40:31] You have a local economy that's actually taking that money and circulating it three to five times. That's really your economy. Our GDP in Fairfax County is $134 billion. It's the largest in the state. Where we go, the state goes. If you look at the Northern Virginia in completion, it's a $264 billion economy.

[00:40:50] It would be the 24th largest state. It would be the 40th largest country in the world. It is a huge economy. It's only 3% of the land. We are the economy of the state. And by the way, Fairfax is the flagship. And the more we can integrate the services of the county, even on permits, on any level.

[00:41:09] We've been working very closely with Deputy Rachel Flynn. Actually, I had lunch with her yesterday when we talked about some of these things. But we really are starting to integrate pieces that are extraordinarily important to companies' growth. Because if they don't have capital, if they can't get it built, if they can't get the staff, it doesn't happen.

[00:41:29] So the more we can integrate this, the better. So to me, I think, again, the Board of Supervisors has done a great job. The EAC has done a great job. But as with most things, it can be improved. I think the size of the EAC makes it complicated. It's more like, I said, like a Congress.

[00:41:45] We mean more like committee, something, you know, and we all have this experience, you know, where we are in, we're on these groups and, you know, 40, 50, 60, 70 people. I'm on an alumni board. It's so big. You can't get anything done. So it always breaks down the committees.

[00:42:00] But I think if it was smaller, if it was more really targeted, like really focused on like pieces of the economy, you know, private sector, high growth, nonprofit, educational, and government, I think that that would be a nice mix.

[00:42:16] So that's my five minutes. I'll stop right there. Any questions you have? Well, I have to ask you at least one question because we've had a number of conversations about this. is also in a minute or two you've talked about the future of fairfax county not only in terms of what we're doing now but but what's likely to be over the horizon or maybe not so much over the horizon but it's clearly it's coming our way and just to take a moment on that and how do we how do we kind of bring that into the board's awareness but also maybe more importantly how do we facilitate the county's support of those those new frontiers if you will well the we we have all

[00:42:53] experiencing this right now, AI. AI is like probably in front of everybody's face every day. It comes on your phone. It's when you're trying to work with your bank. The reality is we are actually the epicenter of AI for the Eastern Seaboard. We have the second highest number of AI openings in the country, in Northern Virginia. Number one is Silicon Valley. And they've been, everybody talks about Silicon Valley, but they always look over us. So AI is going to be huge in our future is going to make our companies more productive. It's even going to make our small vendors more productive in terms of targeting markets, getting customers. So AI is one.

[00:43:32] One that has surprised us, about three years ago, we recruited Blue Origin. And I have to tell you, we've had explosive growth in space now. We have satellite companies actually building satellites in

Fairfax County. Actually, I was at an event the other day with Supervisor Smith where we were working with the CEO of a satellite company that's building in these small tilt-up concrete buildings. These satellites, by the way, aren't much bigger than this notebook, this way and that way. I mean, essentially, they're really these microsatellites. And what's going on is that

[00:44:07] they're creating a network to basically make the internet more robust and to get it to places it hasn't been before. So space is huge. And the third, so short term, I'd say AI. Midterm, I would say space, and long term I would say quantum. And quantum is going to be huge because it's going to transform the computing power that we currently have. It is going to change how data centers are built and operated. It's going to change how you get data and how you use data and how you use knowledge. So those are the kind of the three areas. We've been very fortunate that we've had the Quantum World Congress here in Fairfax last year. It was at the Cap One Center. There were over

[00:44:46] 800 people there. There were 23 countries there. We had Nobel laureates. We had chief science officers from Australia, from the Netherlands. It was a fantastic success. The next one is going to be in Fairfax County at the Cap One Center again, and we're very excited about that. But we are trying to make us a place of thought leadership for quantum, and we're doing it through this Congress. We're supporting it, but it's actually being run by Connected DMV, which is an organization that actually works with all of Northern Virginia, D.C., and suburban Maryland.

[00:45:20] So those are the kind of three areas I see for growth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. County Vic, yes. And I don't want to dovetail off of Mr. Hoskins, and thank you for being here, sir. Data centers are the spearhead of all of these things that Victor has been speaking about, and we have a good plan that obviously is going to be in our next committee meeting, but without them, we're going to be lagged behind.

[00:45:47] Also, George Mason and the University of Maryland, big players in this field, and we're working on research grants with them and using their students for us to move forward. So what you're doing, sir, I really want to appreciate and what you're doing, obviously, as well. But the synergy and the linkage, thinking strategically and not transactionally, is where we're headed.

[00:46:07] And this is why DEI is so important to our life bread as we move forward. Well, you are taking that on to the next part of this, which is asking Rebecca Bader to give a little bit of connectivity between EDA and DEI, as well as in moving forward with the presentation to talk about what should the EAC look like.

[00:46:26] And if you could on the presentation, I would kind of go through it quickly. I've talked to or at least tried to talk to every board member. They should have it. They should know it. And I want to spend as much time as possible. So I'd like to be done by no later than 1030 so we have a half hour at least for dialogue among the boards. Great. Thank you.

[00:46:42] Thank you very much. Rebecca Mowdry, director of the Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives. So very quickly today, I'm just going to review in brief the current EAC structure and composition, a few of the challenges and the opportunities are in front of us through a couple of proposals.

[00:47:02] And really, our goal today is to receive feedback and discussion about the commission objectives and structure in order for us to develop bylaws. This is a great time to consider this for so many

reasons.

[00:47:18] Not only are we at a point of, I'd say, economic transition, including challenges and opportunities, and looking at an Economic Advisory Commission as a body that can help us consider some of those challenges and opportunities to move forward, but also Supervisor Smith and Chairman McKay have asked all county agencies to consider the formation and the status of boards, authorities, and commissions. And the Economic Advisory Commission is a board authority and commission.

[00:47:52] As Victor very aptly pointed out, it is also a very large body with varying participation. So it is a good time to review this. Some of our overarching goals are to ensure that this body is the best structure to meet objectives, and that the EAC provides value to the commissioners, to the county, as well as to the staff. So Chairman Stork outlined kind of the history of the EAC. It was really our kind of modern form, I guess you can say, was put forth via board matter

[00:48:31] in 2008, which allocated 44 seats. An additional 26 seats have been added since then for a total of 70 seats. We have details on all of these seats if anyone is interested, but I think just this overview probably suffices for now. And we have taken a look at kind of how these seats break down. And so when we look at who currently are holding these seats and kind of where they sit

[00:49:03] in three broad categories, you can see that about 20 of those 70 seats are in the private sector or are affiliated with business. About 27 are non-profits or kind of institutional affiliations and 20 are in the public sector or our government, and we currently have three vacancies.

[00:49:28] Participation rates, the average participation rate over the last, from 2021 to 2023, was 56%. We had much higher participation rate in 2021. That is when we were meeting virtual. We were able to meet virtual under the emergency ordinance, and then 2022 and 2023.

[00:49:49] the participation rate of the non-government participants really plummeted. We did take a look at just a bit of input for you to consider a couple of other similar entities in other counties.

[00:50:07] So Loudoun County, their Economic Development Advisory Commission was actually, I'd say, overhauled in 2013. They created a set of bylaws that established a 31-member commission. A majority of those commission members are voting members, so 23 of them, and those are based on industry clusters.

[00:50:30] So those are identified in the bylaws, and there's about 16 different clusters that they identify that they prefer that those voting members are part of those sectors. And then there are also non-voting standing advisory members, and those include kind of established business and kind of community partners, including government.

[00:50:56] And then they annually elect a chair and an officer, and those are voting members. Those are voted in, and those are voting members, meaning from the private sector. I noted a couple of the recent topics that this commission has looked at, including workforce development, housing, the state of Dulles Airport.

[00:51:15] They often bring in, as far as I've seen from their agendas, outside speakers and have a discussion. Another entity that we took a quick look at is Cook County in Illinois. This is the county where Chicago is located, but Chicago is an independent body, so this is just the county itself.

[00:51:31] Their advisory committee is appointed by the county board president, and the majority of the members are private sector members. They are senior level members of the private sector and supporting

institutions.

[00:51:49] It does include government. One of their commissioners sits on that body currently, and they are an active body. They vote on some economic development topics, including finances and incentives, but also have considered things like small business grants.

[00:52:07] They've looked at a manufacturing program that they're working on and also their economic development strategic plan. So I took some time over the last couple of weeks to talk to some existing Economic Advisory Commission members to get their feedback on maybe what's working and areas for improvement.

[00:52:28] So, and I have also heard over the years have had many informal conversations with advisory commission members, and many of them say, and the folks that I specifically asked this over the last couple of weeks have said, networking is very important.

[00:52:44] The opportunity to come together and engage with the board in particular and with board and county staff and among each other is very important, and they find that of value. They appreciate the learning that happens and that there's a mixed group kind of hearing the same information, often on important and current topics, and so they're learning a lot.

[00:53:10] And they have appreciated a lot of the pre-work that has been done. So over the last couple of years, we have really established opportunities for commission members to engage prior to an EAC meeting on the topic at hand. This included workforce, this included place-led economic development, and then we had recently prepared advanced briefing papers on access to capital, and they noted that that has been helpful and valuable.

[00:53:39] Areas to improve, I think it's probably not a surprise to anyone, making sure that we're focusing on a topic and having impactful participatory conversations so that all the Commission members can participate, and that there's a clear outcome from those conversations and that work, and that we continue to look at what's happening in the market, and we're focused on what's coming and transitions, and we're able to be proactive with the most important topics.

[00:54:15] And then opportunities to explore are really the types of topics that we bring. I was told that higher level cross-cutting topics that maybe an entire commission can participate in would be helpful, not necessarily very niche topics that maybe only a few in the room really have expertise or are able to comment on.

[00:54:37] One, for example, that was noted that was a good sort of topic was workforce. Another one may be finance and capital. These are areas that really most businesses are going to have engagement and expertise in some way. They also suggested an earlier start time and more networking and perhaps longer meetings to ensure that we can fit all the content in. So now I'm going to move into just some considerations for the board to discuss and consider. First of all, the objectives and focus seem to be on target. And so the only item that we would suggest

[00:55:15] adding is really including a focus on gathering business intelligence and really putting that private sector towards the front. In terms of structure, this is probably the most significant recommendation, is reducing the total number of EAC seats to somewhere in the range of 25. That is not an exact number. And how that could potentially break down is keeping the entire board on the EAC, having about 8 to 10 private sector member appointments, and approximately 5

[00:55:50] to seven standing seats, standing organizations that are related to economic and business development in the county. And the eight to ten private sector member appointments, we would suggest that those are very senior level, perhaps C-suite executives that are industry focused and uh with including our target industries but a diverse range we would seek geographic diversity and also ensure that young business uh business owners or business people and entrepreneurs are

[00:56:28] included um so a couple of other considerations in terms of the the topics and experts so uh as we move forward with EAC meetings, we can always bring in additional experts to provide specific input and specialized information on topics. They do not necessarily need to be on the EAC to be invited and participate in a meeting. Also, we are able to have ad hoc meetings to ensure that we are getting the best information and talking to the right people

[00:57:07] outside of the Economic Advisory Commission to bring to the full EAC body. And just some considerations kind of on the logistics of the meetings. Again, networking, maybe a slightly longer meeting time, extending the meeting, and then ensuring that the meeting is in a location that literally and figuratively everyone can be at the table.

[00:57:34] So our next steps are to receive your feedback and through that begin to, I would say, finalize or develop the bylaws. We'd like to share our proposed EAC structure back to the board, have additional discussions, and then finally look to create a set of bylaws that would be adopted at a future EAC meeting.

[00:57:58] Thank you. Wow, you did it. Thank you. And just as a further compliment and thanks to Rebecca, I really brought this idea forward a little over a month ago, and she's been all in, elbows on the table.

[00:58:15] I know you spent a lot of time that you probably didn't originally intend to spend, but I think the results are reflected here as a very, very good place to start for how do we reform and really repurpose, reimagine maybe in some ways what this committee should be.

[00:58:31] So thank you very, very much. I'm going to turn to the chairman. Thank you. I'll be brief. I think these recommendations are great. I think this is overdue. I think the EAC is way too big. I think the value for the people participating in the EAC has been diminished because of its size. And I think that's shown through the attendance records in terms of who comes and who doesn't. I think it's just gotten oversized.

[00:58:58] And when I look at the other models and other jurisdictions, one might say, well, those are smaller than we are, so they would have a smaller EAC. I don't think this should have anything to do with the size of the county. I think it should have to do with the size of a manageable group of people who are providing good input to us, whose time is valued because they get a chance to interact with us.

[00:59:18] I think one of the things we need to be conscious of is when we do have joint meetings with them is making sure we're leaving enough time for them to actively participate in the meetings as well. And I know maybe that's not written in here, but I'll be tough on all of us and say we need to listen more and talk less when we're in those meetings because we get a lot more opportunities at this.

[00:59:40] I do like the geographic diversity, the young entrepreneurs piece. I think the structure of this is actually quite similar to our one Fairfax roundtable, and I do think it's vital to have experts come and go when there's a subject matter issue that comes up that maybe someone on the EAC is not a subject matter expert in, but you don't have to be on the EAC to do that because it's a commitment.

[01:00:05] You're making a commitment and I think there's so many people out there in our community You could find a subject matter expert on anything that doesn't mean they want to participate in the EAC But it does mean we want to hear from them and the EAC wants to hear from them So I think that flexibility on rotation is really important, but I think it's critical to keep this around 25 70 is way too big and and look forward to the final recommendations coming forward and also

[01:00:33] Your active involvement, which is implied here in terms of making sure that we get the right balance of different businesses, size of businesses, geographic location, you know, all the elements that are in here, giving great deference to you to make sure that we have those slots arranged in a way that reflects the entirety of the community, I think is really important.

[01:01:02] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to just go down this way, if that's okay, and start with the vice chair. I think this is a good beginning for us looking at all the BACs. I think the focus is really important. People want to feel like the work they're doing is valuable and that their time spent is valuable. So I really appreciate that. As you've said, size is really important.

[01:01:23] And, you know, to me, as we do this work, we always need to keep in mind our strategic plan, right? Are our different BACs helping us achieve the goals in this strategic plan? So I think tying those things together is really important, but I really am very supportive of where you're going. Thank you. Yeah, I'm obviously overall supportive of the 25, if anything. It was kind of ridiculous. It was as large as it was. I go back to Victor's presentation and maybe talk a little bit about the elephant in the room. I mean, we're number two in AI and quantum because of our

[01:02:00] GovCon industry. I mean, and, you know, I think we need to keep some kind of GovCon representation on here to maybe call that as an industry or two, because while we want to grow beyond that being a big part of our industry, kind of hard to do it without their involvement and support. And along those lines, the two might go back to the future a little bit that, you know, our number one challenge now is keeping people here. It's a different world. Workforce is it. And so I think this is going to need to have a very heavy focus on workforce. And the back to the future part is,

[01:02:39] you know, EAC was originally formed by Elaine McConnell to deal with our permitting and zoning process. And as I've been digging into our zoning and permitting process, I'm seeing urban parks being the number one. Some of our zoning and permitting processes are driving the cost of housing up. And that housing affordability is one of our big challenges. So I think I'm giving you, I'm stepping beyond the structure a little bit to where I think we need to target a little bit, but that would be it.

[01:03:07] And I think we've got a great start on financing, thanks to Rodney bringing back Grub Steak Breakfast, I think, and the Connect. So we need to keep that thing alive. But those are the two big issues that I see that we ought to be focused on, and getting it down to 25.

[01:03:25] And I like the idea of having subgroups, too, and bringing experts in and focusing on some of these critical, critical, critical targets. So, but good job. Yeah, I totally support this.

[01:03:41] And I look forward to, I guess, getting a little more into how the coordination will happen as district supervisors identify potential candidates and coordinating with the chairman's office. But, yeah, I think this makes a lot of sense. Thank you.

[01:03:59] Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and appreciate you taking the initiative to tackle this. Not an easy, easier to put this off for another day or another year, another chairman. So thank you for taking it on.

Agree with the general approach. I think the only kind of thought that I have hearing the presentation and I think the standing positions are valuable.

[01:04:22] And to me, it seems like there would be value in having some folks like the Mason Small Business Center, other organizations that are part of CORE as standing members, because there's a value in hearing from a business leader who's focused on their industry and their niche and what their business is interested in. But there's also value in hearing from somebody who spends every day talking to all kinds of businesses and all kinds of industries and has a broader perspective.

[01:04:57] So that's just a thought to think about in terms of those standing positions, having folks who have that broad view and perspective of what businesses are facing. First of all, thank you.

[01:05:12] I think I agree that this is much needed, especially aligning with how to be effective and how to make sure that we are tied into not just what's here and doing well, but sort of what's emerging, as Victor also raised, right? What are the biggest three issues?

[01:05:29] I think what I'm thinking following on Unsupervised Rockenshaw is, and, you know, we have these in other areas where you have the voting members, and then you definitely, I think, need to have the staff and the people and the experts who are there and able to bring that broader perspective both from inside the county and from chambers and industry to really help think about, I mean, Appian was started in a basement here in Fairfax County, right, and now it is one of the largest.

[01:05:59] I know there are others like that. So thinking about the established and these emerging companies and what challenges they start to see, which we know will change, right? Right now, housing, workforce, those are some of the big ones, but what are the emerging challenges and opportunities, and how do we try to stay ahead of those?

[01:06:16] But absolutely very excited about this proposal. So thank you. I'll just say I'm fully supportive and appreciate the presentation and all the work that's been done up until now. The one thing I would say is I really thought the discussion on access to capital in one of our previous EAC meetings was really helpful, just to have a panel of people come in and kind of apprise us of kind of what the state of, you know, emerging investing is and for us to hear and understand that.

[01:06:49] So I hope, as you've indicated, that could be a part of the work that's done with this newly configured EAC. And just really appreciate the idea about having diverse young members as a part of it, because I think that's something that our current EAC has not been able to do, but recognize this is an opportunity for us to make a change. And then last, I really appreciated the point about the ad hoc, being able to kind of deep dive with experts, even outside the group.

[01:07:24] that makes a lot of sense as well. So thank you for the presentation and look forward to seeing the next iteration of the EAC. Thank you. I'll echo the comments of resident youth leader Rodney Lusk that we need more young people involved in these types of boards, authorities, and commissions. I feel like that's true across boards, authorities, and commissions and definitely true with this one. My one comment is that we're going from a group that's extremely large where

[01:07:59] you could argue that you've got a lot of networking because you're meeting 70 leaders in the area to a group that's smaller. I think that's much more effective for us actually getting work done, but it creates a need and an opportunity, which I think you've identified. You bring in additional experts to meetings. You have ad hoc meetings established for special needs. You get a little creative in what

meetings look like, nine to 11 as an example. So I think you're obviously thinking about all these things and have done a really great job with this presentation. But

[01:08:39] I think that was just something that jumped out at me. If we want to keep the networking structure, we're going to have to be a little bit more creative at the same time we also need a lot more participation than 29 percent or whatever it was so thank you for this presentation appreciate it and i just i'm going to i want us to think a moment about this and then i'd like to ask mr hoskins to speak as well but just we talked a little bit rebecca talked a little bit about subgroups and i think there are definitely ways that we need to try because we know the universe we have is huge, and that's why it was 70 members.

[01:09:17] It wasn't because we have all these different needs and different groups in some way of maybe setting these up, but having them interface in some way is, I think, an opportunity, and that's ultimately what we want you all to be thinking about and challenging us on. So other ideas about how do we make this better, we're listening.

[01:09:37] We spent a lot of time trying to figure this out, and we know we haven't figured it out, but we have at least a direction that we're going that I think seems to be supported. But how do we get across the finish line with a group that truly will meet the needs of Fairfax County, all the different needs of Fairfax County?

[01:09:55] So, Mr. Hoskins, what do you think? I mean, we want your – what do you think? How can we make this better? Well, first of all, I think the recommendations are excellent. I think they're spot on. Rebecca, you did a great job on the analysis and comparatives.

[01:10:11] I think they really – I think those things will really work. One of the things that I would suggest, though, is as the committee meets, that you find a champion for an issue that gets together with two or three people to get something done. Because this is what happens.

[01:10:27] I mean, all of us sit on boards. All of us sit in these groups. And if there's not a champion, somebody who's passionate about the topic and who really wants to run with it, and they can gather at least one or two other people with them, it just that thing that you propose just kind of fades away by the next meeting or by the next two meetings so that that's my only suggestion everything else is spot on thank you mr chairman anybody else i i would just add i know we're going to look at you know a lot of geographic age diversity all the elements to make this work but i do think uh we just heard from mr hoskins about

[01:11:06] ai we heard about space satellites we heard about quantum we know about government contracting and how important that is. Um, I would suggest that, you know, we think about those four areas as four areas that we really want to focus on and get input back. Um, and so whether that's somebody on the EAC from those various platforms or whether it's a subcommittee that meets, uh, on those subjects, I mean, we've identified emerging, uh, industries in the county. We know where, you know,

[01:11:40] our most important successes from an economic standpoint, and I think we need to, if we could focus on those four things out of the gates, I think it would be helpful not only in thinking about who's sitting on this, but then also thinking about committee structure as well, and I know the county executive has spent some significant time on AI with NACO as well, and so one of the things we didn't talk about with AI here that's not a good topic for this committee per se, but at some point, I think thinking about AI in terms of our county operations, external to what's going on in the private sector is something we probably want to be doing some follow-up on down the road, and I

[01:12:18] don't know if that's something you wanted to touch on or not, but I do think those four areas we just mentioned here are four critical ones to be in mind of when we relaunch the EAC. Thank you, Chairman McKay and Chairman Stork. I believe AI is the wave, obviously, of today and to the future. We've been doing it here in Fairfax County for probably about 14 years, but we have not infiltrated how we could make our effective and efficient government more effective and efficient through the use of AI, and we're working on some things with DPSC that will be forthcoming. I also want

[01:12:52] to state that we are also looking at cybersecurity as something that we really need to understand and bring in. We've been at CES a couple times speaking on this topic from a governmental entity. We were the only government there, so we've been asked to come back in July to talk about what we're doing here in Fairfax County, and I thank you for allowing us that opportunity to go out and speak on these topics because it is important for us to stay with the cutting edge, and that is the key to our success in Fairfax County.

[01:13:29] Thank you, Mr. Hill. Other comments? We have a few minutes, and we don't need to take more, and people don't have anything else, but I wanted to at least make sure we covered all the bases here. All right, so just to conclude, we've got some work to do to bring this together as kind of a package to then send it out to you all and get your thoughts that we ultimately would bring to the next EAC meeting.

[01:13:57] And some of that mechanics of how best to do that, we're not even sure yet. We're going to work it through. But the next EAC meeting is scheduled for May, so we know we have a little bit of work to do in a short period of time. So, again, I want to thank Mr. Chairman as well as our County Executive and Deputy County Executive and Rebecca Madry for their work and colleagues for the time that you spent the last – some of you last week or two talking with me about how do we move this along.

[01:14:26] And, finally, I wanted to particularly thank my staff, Christine Warren, who's been coordinating and working with this to help bring this forward, and I want to thank you all for doing that. And with that, this meeting is adjourned 12 minutes early.

