

MINUTES
Regular GEBAC Meeting of the
Gardena Economic Business Advisory Commission
Wednesday, May 21, 2025

The Regular GEBAC Meeting Notice and Agenda of the Gardena Economic Business Advisory Commission of the City of Gardena, California, was called to order at 11:30 AM on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, in the Nakaoka Community Center, 1st Floor, Room A at 1670 W. 162nd Street, Gardena, California.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:51 AM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Steve Rogers; Commissioner Gene Hale, Commissioner Joshua Bettencourt; Commissioner Jules Laross Kanhan; Commissioner Naresh Solanki; Commissioner Gilbert Bernal Jr; Commissioner Christyna Giles Washington; and Commissioner Paul Giuliano. Employees present: Economic Development Manager Jackie Choi and Administrative Analyst I, Georgina Placido.

Commissioners Moe Shemirani and Kale Morita were absent.

Chair Rogers welcomed Commissioner Paul Giuliano, the new appointee from Mayor Cerda. He expressed his appreciation for Commissioner Giuliano, stating that he believes Giuliano will be a valuable addition to the GEBAC Commission.

Chair Rogers announced that this would be his last meeting as the GEBAC Chairman. He informed everyone that there are two open positions: Chair and Vice-Chair. He recommended that nominations and a vote be conducted to fill these positions. Once elected, the new Chair and Vice-Chair will take effect at the next meeting.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. ELECTIONS

4.A Election of Chair

Chair Rogers made a recommendation to elect Commissioner Joshua Bettencourt as the new Chair. Commissioner Naresh Solanki seconded the recommendation.

Commissioner Bettencourt accepted the nomination and election as the new GEBAC Chairman.

Chair Rogers expressed his gratitude and acknowledged Commissioner Bettencourt's interest and contributions to the commission and the revitalization program.

Economic Development Manager Jackie Choi explained that the voting process would require a majority of votes from all the Commissioners in attendance.

MOTION: A motion was made by Chair Rogers and seconded by Commissioner Solanki to Elect Commissioner Joshua Bettencourt as the New Chair for the Gardena Economic Business Advisory Commission:

Ayes: Rogers, Hale, Bettencourt, Kanhan, Solanki, Bernal, Washington, and Giuliano

Noes: None

Absent: Shemirani and Morita

Ms. Choi explained that when the GEBAC was formalized as a Commission from a Committee, the city adopted an ordinance that was incorporated into the Municipal Code. This code specifies that GEBAC must adopt its own bylaws, which means it is up to GEBAC to determine when meetings will be scheduled, how the Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed, and the duration of their terms. Currently, there are no adopted bylaws, so we are following the rules set forth by the Municipal Code. She informed everyone that by the next meeting, staff would bring back a recommendation for bylaws. This document will help the Commissioners finalize the details regarding meeting dates, times, locations, and the terms of service for the Chair and Vice-Chair, along with any additional information. Ms. Choi also noted that the handbook provided to all Commissioners upon their appointment discusses the Brown Act, which is mandatory for all council members and commissions. Under the Brown Act, commissions can adopt their own bylaws specifically concerning the nomination of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and the meeting schedule.

Chair Rogers recommended that meetings be held every other month and that both the Chair and Vice-Chair serve a minimum term of two years. This would provide the officers with sufficient time to accomplish their objectives.

Ms. Choi suggested that staff will research how other commissions in the city are approaching this issue and present their findings as options for the Commission to consider.

4.B Election of Vice Chair

Commissioner Hale made a recommendation to elect Commissioner Giuliano as the new Vice-Chair. Commissioner Joshua Bettencourt seconded the recommendation.

Commissioner Giuliano accepted the nomination and election as the new GEBAC Vice-Chair.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Hale and seconded by Commissioner Bettencourt to Elect Commissioner Paul Giuliano as the New Vice-Chair for the Gardena Economic Business Advisory Commission:

Ayes: Rogers, Hale, Bettencourt, Kanhan, Solanki, Bernal, Washington, and Giuliano

Noes: None

Absent: Shemirani and Morita

Chair Rogers congratulated Commissioner Giuliano and Bettencourt on their new roles as Chair and Vice Chair. He acknowledged Mayor Cerda for her presence and thanked her for attending the meeting.

Mayor Cerda expressed her happiness at being able to attend and check in on the Commission. She mentioned that she has been eager to attend the meeting since the introduction of the Gardena Boulevard revitalization program to the City Council. Mayor Cerda commended all the commissioners for their hard work and expressed her appreciation for Chair Rogers, as this was his last meeting. She thanked him for his years of service and friendship.

Chair Rogers expressed his gratitude to Mayor Cerda, all members of the GEBAC Commission, and staff. He noted that he will always consider Gardena as part of his home. Commissioner Hale shared some background history about Chair Rogers and the GEBAC Commission.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – No Items

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6.A January 15, 2025

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Bettencourt and seconded by Commissioner Washington to approve the minutes of the meeting on January 15, 2025:

Ayes: Rogers, Bettencourt, Kanhan, Bernal, Washington

Noes: None

Absent: Shemirani and Morita

7. NEW BUSINESS / MEMBER INITIATIVES

7.A Introduction of a New Commissioner - Paul Giuliano

Commissioner Giuliano (New Vice-Chair) introduced himself and provided background on his family's long-standing business in Gardena. He expressed his desire to contribute to the commission and continue his family's legacy in the city. Chair Rogers shared his own experiences in the business world, while Commissioner Washington reminisced about her own memories of Giuliano's business.

Mayor Cerda mentioned that she would be interested in touring his business, similar to the visit they made to Nissin, where they had the opportunity to see how noodles were made and packaged.

7.B Recommendation on the Appointment of Jackie Choi to Serve as the Board Member of the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB).

Ms. Choi informed everyone that she has been the board member since she started working for Gardena. She informed everyone that when the reappointment occurs, it will go before the City Council for approval before being sent to the South Bay WIB.

MOTION: A motion was made by Chair Rogers and seconded by Commissioner Washington to Appoint Jackie Choi to Serve as the Board Member of the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB):

Ayes: Rogers, Hale, Bettencourt, Kanhan, Solanki, Bernal, Washington, and Giuliano

Noes: None

Absent: Shemirani and Morita

7.C Discussion of the Gardena Boulevard Revitalization Program

Ms. Choi provided an update on the status of the Gardena Boulevard revitalization program. She explained that city staff is currently seeking a consultant to help manage the program. Once a consultant is selected, the information will be presented back to the GEBAC Commission.

Commissioner Hale inquired about the final amount of the grant. Ms. Choi confirmed that each business could receive up to thirty thousand dollars, and the overall grant total was two million dollars.

Commissioner Bernal asked if there was a set timeframe for the program. Ms. Choi replied that there is currently no set timeframe. She proceeded to explain the GEBAC recommendations, the involvement of city staff, the program process, the consultant's role, marketing efforts, community meetings, and the application process, noting that participation in the program would be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Commissioner Washington asked if the consultant will be a secondary consultant. Commissioner Hale also asked for clarification. Ms. Choi confirmed that was correct, noting that the first consultant was hired solely for the design of the facade.

Commissioner Bettencourt recalled a prior discussion about needing to start or finish by a certain date to retain or utilize the funds; otherwise, the money would be lost. Ms. Choi confirmed that they have five years for the process and that they are currently in year two. He also asked if the funds were provided by the state. Ms. Choi confirmed that the funds had already been received.

Chair Rogers then asked Mayor Cerda about the City Council's position on the recommendations for the colors presented. Mayor Cerda responded that the recommended colors were accepted; however, one member of the public expressed reservations. It was ultimately determined that this individual was not a current business owner and noted that there was not a unanimous vote among the Council members, as some members expressed their concerns about the colors.

8. CITY MANAGER COMMUNICATIONS

No reportable items.

9. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Economic Development Manager Jackie Choi shared details about the annual job fair that will be co-hosted with the South Bay Workforce Investment Board on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at the Nakaoka Community Center from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bernal, Mayor Cerda and Commissioner Washington had questions and Ms. Choi answered them all.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATIONS

- 1) CHAIR ROGERS – He asked if the city exploring additional grant opportunities to expand the revitalization program. Ms. Choi confirmed that the city is looking for other grants.
- 2) COMMISSIONER HALE – No items to report.
- 3) COMMISSIONER BETTENCOURT - He thanked Chair Rogers for the recommendation.
- 4) COMMISSIONER KANHAN – No items to report.
- 5) COMMISSIONER SOLANKI – He thanked Chair Rogers for his service.
- 6) COMMISSIONER BERNAL – No items to report.
- 7) COMMISSIONER WASHINGTON – She expressed concerns regarding the challenges faced by local businesses and the need for better communication and assistance from the city. Commissioner Hale shared his thoughts on the issue, and Ms. Choi mentioned that she is available to assist or guide the business owners in the right direction, depending on the specific problems they encounter.
- 8) COMMISSIONER GIULIANO – No items to report.

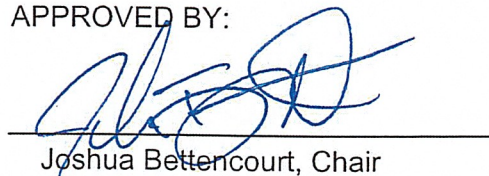
11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Rogers adjourned the meeting at 12:31 PM.

SUBMITTED:


Jackie Choi, Liaison

APPROVED BY:


Joshua Bettencourt, Chair