

Memorandum

TO: City Council

FROM: Tom Simonson , Assistant City Manager and Community Development Director

DATE: March 3, 2025

SUBJECT: Appointments to the Economic Development Commission

ITEM NUMBER: 10.b

SECTION: GENERAL BUSINESS

REQUESTED MOTION

To appoint the following persons to serve on the economic development commission, as recommended:

Jim Diffley (to a new term expiring January 31, 2028)
Denise Firkus (to fill a current term expiring January 31, 2026)
Jessica Daniels (as a higher education partner member)

INTRODUCTION

The city council is being asked to appoint new members to the economic development commission (EDC) to fill existing vacancies. The appointments are recommended by the economic development commission, after reviewing all submitted applications and conducting interviews with the candidates.

DISCUSSION

There are currently 2 vacancies on the economic development commission, one created by the resignation last fall of Shelley Roe due to her move out of the city (remaining term to expire on January 31, 2026), and one open seat due to long-time member Josh Wing electing to not be reappointed (to a new 3-year term expiring on January 31, 2028).

The municipal code, which governs the structure of the commission, allows up to 13 full members of which the majority must be residents. Since the membership was increased, the desire is to have no more than 4 non-resident members from the business community. The EDC currently has 12 members serving (including a member partner from the Mounds View school district).

The EDC reviewed 7 applications during the most recent solicitation period, including a couple of applications received from the previous open appointments process from last year that were also considered with the new applicants. Applications reviewed and considered were from the following persons (all attached with this report):

- Zakariya Abdullahi
- Jessica Daniels*

- Jim Diffley*
- Denise Firkus*
- Luke Hemken*
- Mari Koplin*
- Alexis Tyrrell

* interviewed by the EDC

The commission reviewed all of the applications at their January meeting and offered interviews to all the candidates. Five of the seven applicants were able to participate in interviews with the EDC at the meeting on February 18, 2025. At the conclusion of the interviews, the commission discussed the candidates and results of the interviews, noting the exceptionally strong group of applicants. The top three candidates ranked by the commission were Jim Diffley, Jessica Daniels, and Denise Firkus based on their knowledge, area of expertise, and experience. Since the EDC had three preferred candidates for two vacancies, it was the consensus of the commission to recommend the appointments of Jim Diffley and Denise Firkus to fill the two member openings, and also offer an appointment to Jessica Daniels as a partner member representing higher education (she works for Bethel University and is a Shoreview resident). The partner member for higher education would be consistent with and similar to when Mindy Handberg was appointed to the EDC as a member partner representing secondary education (Mounds View school district). As recommended, this would maintain the maximum number of members of the commission at 13, with 2 partner members representing education given the importance to business and workforce.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of the economic development commission (EDC) that the city council appoint the following persons to serve on the commission:

Jim Diffley (to a new term expiring January 31, 2028)
 Denise Firkus (to fill a current term expiring January 31, 2026)
 Jessica Daniels (as a higher education partner member)

ATTACHMENTS

[Jessica Daniels - EDC applicant](#)
[Jim Diffley - EDC applicant](#)
[Zakariya Abdullahi - EDC applicant](#)
[Denise Firkus - EDC applicant](#)
[Luke Hemken - EDC applicant](#)
[Mari Koplin - EDC applicant](#)
[Alexis Tyrrell - EDC applicant](#)