

**ARENA DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Kelly Girtz, Committee Chair  
Commissioner Allison Wright  
Commissioner John Culpepper  
David Bradley, Athens Chamber of Commerce  
Jason Leonard, Downtown Development Authority  
Jennifer Zwirn, Classic Center Authority  
Tres Small, Classic Center Authority

Committee Members Absent:

Staff:

Bob Cowell, County Manager  
Judd Drake, County Attorney

Chinesia Thompson, Recorder  
Commissioner Stephanie Johnson

Visitors:

Paul Cramer, Classic Center

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Committee Chair Mayor Kelly Girtz called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**A. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Jennifer Zwirn moved to approve the agenda, David Bradley seconded the motion. With no discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved by the committee.

**B. Approval of Minutes:**

The draft minutes from June 10, 2025, were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Allison Wright and seconded by Jason Leonard. The motion passed unanimously.

**C. Review & Discussion of Submittals for Arena District Development Facilitator RFQ**

The committee reviewed & scored 13 proposals submitted in response to the RFQ for the Arena District project. Each submission was scored based on understanding of the project, technical approach, team qualifications, project management, and relevant experience. Pricing and presentation/interview scores were not yet included at this stage.

Committee members shared their top five firms based on individual evaluations. After discussion, the group agreed to narrow the list to four firms to be invited for interviews and presentations. Those four firms were CBRE, Seven Oaks, Accenture, Brailsford & Dunlavey.

Members noted that all applicants were highly qualified and had close evaluation scores. Several firms had overlapping experience on similar projects. Manager Cowell shared insight from prior experience in Roanoke, emphasizing that the interview process would be key to identifying which firms could best tailor their work to the city's specific needs and deliver value. The committee discussed determining which team members would directly manage the project and ensuring interview questions focused on adaptability, local relevance, and financial

feasibility. Members agreed that pricing, project start dates, and proposed timelines would be important considerations following interviews.

The committee decided to invite the four top-ranked firms to present and answer structured questions. Committee members will submit suggested interview questions by Friday, after which staff will compile and distribute a final list. Potential question areas include:

- Experience working with similar public–private partnerships
- Prior collaboration with project partners
- Proposed project timelines and staffing commitments
- Strategies for maximizing revenue and leveraging assets to pay bond debt
- Start date availability and expected project duration

Committee members highlighted that interview questions must be consistent across all firms. Members also discussed fairness, confidentiality, and the need to avoid individual communications with bidders.

#### **D. Identify Next Meeting Date**

Interviews will be held over two days:

- October 15 (morning, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.)
- October 16 (afternoon, 1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.)

Each firm will be given an hour to present, followed by Q&A and committee discussion. Staff will confirm availability with the firms and send calendar invites.

#### **E. Adjourn**

Before adjourning, the committee agreed that members would email their final interview questions by Friday and submit scoring sheets for documentation. Staff will notify firms of their status and presentation details. Presentations will be public and streamed for transparency. The committee determined that site visits were unnecessary since all firms received comprehensive site information during the RFQ process.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:58 p.m. following a motion by Commissioner Wright and a second by Jennifer Zwirn.