

ARENA DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 10, 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

Committee Members Absent:

Tres Small, Classic Center Authority (Phone)

Staff:

Judd Drake, Interim County Manager
John Hawkins, Interim - County Attorney

Chinesia Thompson, Recorder

Visitors:

Paul Cramer, Classic Center
Danny – Attorney's Office Intern

Committee Chair Mayor Kelly Girtz called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

A. Approval of Meeting Agenda

The first order of business was the approval of the meeting agenda. Jennifer Zwirn moved to approve the agenda, and Commissioner John Culpepper seconded the motion. With no discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved by the committee

B. Approval of Minutes:

The draft minutes from June 4, 2025, were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Allison Wright and seconded by David Bradley. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Review & Approval of RFQ

Interim County Manager Judd Drake shared that he has consulted with attorney Blake Sharpton of Butler Snow, a firm with extensive experience in development projects across the Southeast, including the Battery Atlanta project. Together, they worked to revise the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) document, making sure it includes important elements such as an evaluation and selection process. The committee discussed the importance of transparency and fairness throughout the developer selection process. To that end, all inquiries from potential applicants will be managed by the Purchasing Department. General inquiries will go to Renee Durie, while technical questions will be handled by Ila McConnell. Judd informed the committee that staff will collect and post standardized responses to all submitted questions to ensure all firms receive the same answers. Additionally, the committee discussed site visits for interested firms. The committee decided that site visits will be scheduled as group tours before the submission deadline. The dates for these tours will be included in the RFQ.

A clarification was made regarding the role of the selected firm. The RFQ initially included language suggesting the firm could serve as the master developer. However, this was removed

to avoid conflicts. The committee agreed that the selected firm should act solely as a facilitator to help identify a qualified master developer. The committee discussed that the contracting authority should be either the Classic Center Authority or a similar development authority rather than ACCGov. This change would provide greater flexibility and avoid potential conflicts with local purchasing policies.

The committee discussed the RFQ process timeline. The RFQ will be posted on Friday, June 13, with submissions due by Friday, July 11. Purchasing will forward submittals to the committee by July 15th. Mayor Kelly Girtz (Chair) asked the committee if they were comfortable proceeding with the entire committee serving as the review body for the RFQ submissions. The committee members unanimously agreed that they preferred the full group to participate in the review process rather than forming a smaller subcommittee. The committee will review and score submissions independently from July 15 through July 25. A review meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 29, though a Doodle poll will be sent out to confirm availability. Finalist presentations will take place on August 7 and 8 in open public sessions. The goal is to select a firm in late August or early September, with final contract negotiations to follow.

To ensure clarity and consistency, several amendments were made to the RFQ document. Language allowing the facilitating firm to also serve as the master developer was removed. Other language was updated to highlight that stakeholder engagement is a required part of the master planning process.

Jennifer Zwirn made a motion to approve the RFQ with all noted amendments and including evaluation and selection process. David Bradley seconded. The committee voted unanimously and the motion carried.

D. Funding for Role

Interim Manager Judd Drake noted that a decision regarding project funding will need to be made by August. He shared that the Athens Downtown Development Authority (ADDA) had expressed they do not wish to participate in co-funding the effort, which would leave ACCGov and the Classic Center Authority as the likely funding partners. In response to questions from committee members about the potential use of Tax Allocation District (TAD) funds, Judd stated that additional research is needed to determine eligibility. As such, the funding source remains to be determined.

E. Identify Next Meeting Date

The Committee agreed to tentatively hold July 15 for a follow-up meeting, if needed. A Doodle poll will be used to reschedule the July 29 meeting to accommodate absences.

During further discussion Interim Manager noticed another change that he wished to make as it relates to the RFQ. Two bullet points from the job description relating to placing tenants and coordinating multiple developers were struck. A Motion was made by Commissioner Allison Wright and seconded by Commissioner Culpepper. Motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wright and seconded by David Bradley to strike sentence on first page that states “ultimately serve as a master developer”.

F. Adjourn

Jason Leonard made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Wright seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.