

**M A D E R A C O U N T Y**  
***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***  
***COMMISSION***  
**B O A R D O F C O M M I S S I O N E R S**

January 12, 2026

**MINUTES**

*The Madera County Economic Development Commission meetings are open to the public. Members of the public were advised at the posting of the agenda that the meeting was available for public viewing and participation through Zoom.*

**PRESENT:** *Rob Poythress, Ollia Ridge, Jordan Wamhoff, Maiknue Vang, Waseem Ahmed, John McCann, Laura Young*

**ABSENT:** *Elsa Mejia, Kara Shearer, Dennis Haworth, Adam Olivares, Melissa Jones*

**STAFF:** *Kristina Gallagher, Lois Leonard, Elena Estrada*

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER**

*The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Poythress.*

**2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT**

*None.*

**3.0 INTRODUCTIONS & RECOGNITION-**

*Self-Introductions were made with Nathan Alonzo, PG&E, Local Government Affairs in attendance.*

**4.0 CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA**

*On motion by Commissioner Wamhoff and seconded by Commissioner Ridge, the agenda is approved as presented. Motion carried.*

## **5.0 CONSENT CALENDAR**

### **5.1 Madera County Economic Development Commission Minutes**

- October 13, 2025

### **5.2 Madera County Economic Development Financial Report**

- December 2025

*On motion by Commissioner Wamhoff and seconded by Commissioner Ridge, the consent calendar is approved as presented. Motion carried.*

## **6.0 ACTION ITEMS-**

None.

## **7.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **7.1 Presentation: Nathan Alonzo, PG&E, Local Government Affairs**

*Nathan gave an update on the work completed in Madera County and work to be completed in the future. They installed 27 weather stations and 5 high-definition cameras to allow for better prediction and response to wildfire risk and severe weather year round. They created a safety and infrastructure protection team (SIPT) which includes 48 SIPT engines, each staffed by former firefighters outfitted with wildland firefighting tools and equipment. They are in the process of strengthening the electrical system by moving powerlines underground and installing strengthened poles and covered powerlines. Reviewed the 2025-2027 undergrounding forecast and the 2025-2027 system upgrades forecast. He gave an overview of the vegetation management program and enhanced powerline safety settings. Reviewed rates and affordability and financial assistance programs along with customer resources and support. Gave an update on the 3 substations in Madera County. With the growth in Madera County, we will always have a need for more reliable power.*

## **8.0 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

None.

## **9.0 OPEN DISCUSSION/REPORT/INFORMATION**

### **9.1 Commissioners Reports**

**Commissioner Poythress - (Madera Chamber)-** *reported the chamber held a number of events over the year. Planning several ribbon cuttings and sending information to employers.*

**Commissioner Ridge - (Golden Valley Chamber)** – reported ticket sales are going really great for their annual crab feed. They started their Honorary Mayor fundraiser race in the Ranchos, which is always a lot of fun. They made a lot of money for their tree lighting fundraiser. Lots of building going on in their area.

**Commissioner Wamhoff- (Board of Supervisors)** – reported the Board of Supervisors appointed Supervisor Macaulay as Chairman and Supervisor Wamhoff as Vice-Chair. They held their first board meeting of the year in Oakhurst. They have started budget talks and he noted the press reports regarding the county being in financial trouble is misleading. They are working towards a balanced budget without pulling from a reserve fund. Their audit is complete and is out for comment.

**Commissioner McCann - (Industry at Large)** – reported they are busy at Evapco. They hired two new managers, splitting HR and Safety. They expect to hire an additional 30-50 people in 2026 adding another shift for their new dry cooler line.

**Commissioner Vang- (Workforce Investment Board)-** reported they are restructuring their board and added a representative from Evapco and Auto Zone. Finalizing contracts to bring CNA training to Madera. Their school bus driver training program is going so well with Madera Unified they are replicating it with Golden Valley School District and Yosemite High School. It's a unique partnership. The district provides access to the equipment and buses while the training provider reimburses them for each participant with the workforce board creating the contract. She shared an upcoming Labor Law Update webinar. They still have training dollars they need to spend and distributed a training flyer to be shared.

**Commissioner Young - (Coarsegold Chamber)** – reported that Diane and Richard Boland sold Coarsegold Village to Chukchansi. With Diane retiring, they have decided to dissolve the chamber. They've had very poor membership and are unable to get volunteers for any events they were doing. And have had no nominations for a new board. It just seemed to be time. They investigated merging with the Oakhurst Chamber but nothing has transpired. They will give scholarships in May, bringing their balance to zero.

**Commissioner Ahmed- (City of Chowchilla)** – reported they had a ribbon cutting for Madera Auto Center. Auto Zone will hold a grand opening tomorrow and the chamber will have their annual installation dinner on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**9.2 Executive Director Gallagher-** *reported this report is a reiteration for the Executive Committee. Reflecting on 2025, we are the fastest growing county in terms of housing units. We were able to get Raley's One Market in Riverstone, City of Chowchilla had Auto Zone open, Madera Community Hospital officially reopened. 7 -11 Travel Center and Truck Stop broke ground at Ave 17 & 99 and in Chowchilla the opening of Madera Auto Center. Gimme Seaweed received a \$2.8 million Cal Competes Tax Credit. It's a big deal, since Madera hasn't received a credit since 2015 and 2017. Both times, the businesses were not able to retain those credits. Gimme Seaweed is still looking for a site. She worked really hard to help them by engaging with local legislators, getting letters of support and reaching out to the source including the Governor. Also setting up a meeting with GoBiz, putting the pressure on them. Gallagher was appointed by the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to be part of a Gateway Charter. They will meet quarterly. In December, attended CSAC mostly to see where their focus will be and priorities are in the new year. They're really going to focus on transportation funding and the future of transportation funding. She plans to focus on legislation in 2026, believing that economic development goes hand in hand with legislation. She is working on a principal's document that she will run by the Executive Committee for approval and then take to the board for an overview. She will attend the CALED-Rural Economic Development Exchange in mid-January and will attend the Chowchilla Chamber dinner installation. After speaking with a representative from the North Fork Rancheria regarding the most recent lawsuit, they believe they are in compliance and following federal rules. The project is still a go, and they plan to open in September 2026. The California Legislature reconvened on January 5<sup>th</sup> and has until January 31<sup>st</sup> to pass the two-year bills. The State budget has come out and she will need more time to review before giving an update on it. She read there is a \$2.4 billion shortfall and a \$22 Billion deficit in 27/28. All of this will be addressed in the May revise. At the last Executive Committee meeting they approved a Legislative Mission in March.*

**9.3 Manager of Business Development & Marketing-** *reported the website is being a bit revamped, adding pictures, a Q&A section and keeping the blog up to date.*

**9.4 Business Assistance/Office Manager-** *reported a loan for the City of Madera has been approved.*

## **10.0 NEXT MEETING**

*The next meeting of the Commission will be held on April 13, 2026.*

## **11.0 ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Lois Leonard, Recording Secretary