



**DRAFT Minutes  
EDC Regular Meeting  
January 29, 2026**

Present: Sarah Lansdale, Chair  
Kevin Harvey, Vice Chair (via Zoom)  
Sondra Cochran, Treasurer  
Cris Damianos, Secretary (via zoom)  
Josh Slaughter  
Brian Beedenbender

Excused Absence: Greg Casamento

Also Present: K. Kelly Murphy, Executive Director/CEO  
William Wexler, Esq. Agency Counsel

Ms. Sarah Lansdale, Chair who is presiding over the Meeting today indicated that the documents for this meeting can be accessed and are posted to the EDC's website at <https://www.suffolkeconomic.org/resources/> under the Board Meetings tab.

The Regular Meeting of the Suffolk County Economic Development Corporation held in Media Room #184 located on the lower level of the H. Lee Dennison Building, 100 Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, NY11788 was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Ms. Sarah Lansdale, Chair of the EDC.

**ROLL CALL**

This is the January 29, 2026 Regular Board Meeting of the Suffolk County Economic Development Corporation and for the record, we do have a quorum present. Members of the public may attend the meeting.

## SCIDA MINUTES

### **I. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Lansdale asked if there were any public comments and Ms. Murphy indicated no comments were received.

### **II. ANNUAL MEETING**

KKM: You have before you the packet for the annual meeting. It includes the election of officers, committee assignments, the signatories of corporations, corporate counsel, Bond counsel staff, also the review and readoption of corporation policies, which include disposition of property guidelines and the investment policy, the schedule of meetings for year, and that is the complete packet before you. The slate of officers this year includes Sarah Lansdale as Chair, Kevin Harvey, Vice Chair, Josh Slaughter, Treasurer, and Cris Damianos, Secretary.

Billy. And I know we ask this question every year, can they make one motion?

WW: En mass? Yes, okay.

After further discussion and:

Upon a motion by Brian Beedenbender, seconded by Sondra Cochran, it was:

RESOLVED to adopt the Annual Business items for 2026 for the Suffolk County Economic Development Corporation.

Unanimously carried 6/0.

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

At the last meeting a presentation was made by Lauren Wagner from the Long Island Arts Alliance requesting a grant in the amount of \$50,000 for the Long Island Grants Academy.

The minutes have been provided which detail her presentation from last month. She, unfortunately, can't be here with us today, but Jonathan Keys is with us in case there's any questions.

SL: I know that there was additional information that was raised which was reflected in the discussion from the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting that was provided to members of EDC.

The last page of your packet is the detailed budget that was requested by the board and has been reviewed by staff. Any questions from the Board at this time?

Josh Slaughter: I have some questions as I was not at the last meeting, so I didn't get to see the presentation. Explain just briefly what exactly this is going to be showing.

Jonathan Keyes: Real quick history, my introduction to this, my interest and involvement in this is that I work in the Economic Development Planning Department, we have the Office of Cultural Affairs that administers, cultural competitive, emerging film festival programs, and just a lot with the arts. So, I attended a presentation that Lauren Wagner of the Long Island Arts Alliance gave in, late October.

I was kind of blown away just by some of the information and statistics that she was presenting. In a very quick nutshell, just kind of showing that the receipt of grant funds from NISCA, the New York State Council on the Arts, to Long Island was pretty deficient compared to our role in the arts community statewide. And the Long Island Arts Alliance has essentially proposed a technical assistance grants academy to help local artists develop the capacity to write these grants for themselves and, you know, kind of teach them how to fish type of thing.

JS: So, it specifically funds the ability to get additional grants, or is that basically...

JK: Yeah, it would... a program that would work one-on-one with artists to help them develop more competitive grant applications to the New York State Council on the Arts. There was sort of a test run last year in which Lauren herself worked closely with about 15 artists, and I think 9 were funded, so brought around \$100,000 of new money into the region, just as a result of those efforts, and she's hoping to scale that up, with large support.

JS: Okay, and more specifically, so the types of grants that these artists are applying for, what are those particular funding? What types of programs?

JK: Those are... it's for implementation of arts programs, development of arts. This is less where I'm an expert in the subject matter, but it's generally to support artists in a specific program that they propose, I'm familiar with, some of that programming, BACTA and Davilo. They use the money to put on art shows and bring people in, and it's really nice. They do a lot with it, not just, you know, drawing or painting and stuff like that, music, jazz.

JS: Yeah, I guess my question is, I mean, certainly a worthy cause, and you know I understand the value of the program, but, for the purposes of our board, you know, does it fall in line with the mission of what we're seeking to accomplish with economic development and job creation, and etc.? And I guess, I don't know if someone could explain how it kind of falls within line of what we're responsible for.

JK: Yeah, and I do wish Lauren was here. She did an excellent job of addressing this. When I saw the presentation, what jumped out to me were some statistics she had in terms of economic multipliers, the size of the arts industry on Long Island, and the number of people employed in the arts industry. And how that translates to the economic value. And, you know, sometimes you hear numbers like that, like, oh, there's 2,806 people, and it's hard to... I don't know what that means in the context of 150,000 people, but the rank of the arts industry and the overall compensation of the workforce on Long Island was impressive to me. It's much higher than I think you might think at first blush, and the way that that translates into wages and salaries that circulate locally. Again, I don't have the numbers at the tip of my tongue but that's what jumped out at me when I saw it in October. So, if you look at page 8, Josh, of the Long Island Arts Alliance proposal... It says that there is, you know, more than \$330 million in annual economic activity, from the arts and culture sector. And, you know, there are almost 5,000 local jobs, 4,905 with arts and cultural employment growing at 21.6% over the past 10 years, as compared to the job growth number of just 4.1%. So, we see that it's a growing population. We also see that Suffolk County, Long Island is, not being... not getting its fair share of funding. From New York State, Council on the Arts specifically, this would help prepare that industry and lead, ultimately, to greater economic growth and development which goes into our economy. There's a direct, indirect, you know, induced economic impact. So, in essence, it may be attracting more artists to the region or additional jobs. Helping artists stay in the region, as we all know, you know, costs are always an issue. And that supports vibrancy, downtown areas, people come out, they see an arts stroll, and then they stop and they dive into downtown, that sort of thing. So, it's, you know, it's got that multiplier vertical effect.

SL: Other questions from the board. This is great dialogue.

After further discussion and:

Upon a motion by Sondra Cochran. Second by Brian Beedenbender, it was:

RESOLVED to accept the request authorizing funding to the Long Island Grants Academy in the amount of \$50,000.

Unanimously carried 6/0.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS** – None

V. **OTHER BUSINESS**

The minutes of December 11, 2025, Board of Directors Meeting were presented.

After further discussion and:

Upon a motion by Brian Beedenbender, seconded by Sarah Lansdale, it was:

RESOLVED, to table the Minutes of the December 11, 2025 meeting of the Board of Directors, as a quorum was not present as Josh Slaughter and Sondra Cochran abstained.

The Meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm.



**Draft Minutes  
EDC Regular Meeting  
December 11, 2025**

Present: Sarah Lansdale, Chair  
Kevin Harvey, Vice Chair  
Cris Damianos, Sceretary  
Greg Casamento  
Brian Beedenbender

Excused Absence: Josh Slaughter  
Sondra Cochran

Also Present: K. Kelly Murphy, Executive Director/CEO  
Willian Wexler, Esq. Agency Counsel

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**ROLL CALL**

This is the December 11, 2025, Regular Board Meeting of the Suffolk County Economic Development Corporation and for the record, we do have a quorum present. Members of the public may attend the meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Lansdale asked if there were any public comments and Ms. Murphy indicated no comments were received.

**NEW BUSINESS** – None

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Sarah Lansdale: Moving on to a Long Island Arts Alliance presentation by Lauren Wagner. So, in a nutshell, Lauren, as I understand it, Long Island, and in particular Suffolk County, is not receiving its fair share of funding from New York State arts, entities, like New York State Council on the Arts.

Lauren Wagner: That's correct.

SL: And your proposal is to, your request is for 50,000 in funding, as I understand it, to provide a grants academy for Suffolk County arts organizations to put them in a better position to receive New York State grant funding, is that correct?

LW: Yes, arts organizations and individual artists.

SL: Okay, great. The floor is yours.

Good morning. My name is Lauren Wagner. I am the Executive Director of Long Island Arts Alliance. I really appreciate the opportunity to come down this morning and talk about something that is already a major economic driver in Suffolk County, and how together we can dramatically increase its return to the region. I want to just start off really quickly with the simple truth. Suffolk County has one of the fastest growing creative economies in the state yet to receive some of the lowest levels of safe investment, which means Suffolk is losing out on millions of dollars each and every year that should be circulating right here in the economy. So, in 2023, Long Island Arts Alliance led our region's participation in a national economic impact study, so we could finally quantify what has long been known, anecdotally, that Long Island's arts and culture sector is valuable.

What the study measured was what arts and cultural organizations, spend a year, and then what audiences spend in the community when they attend events. So that's things like shopping and retail, dining and parking and transportation, things like that. When you add those together, the study found that the nonprofit arts and culture sector on Long Island generates over \$330 million each year. So, across Long Island, I've identified 494 nonprofit organizations that have some sort of cultural arts component in there, and 65% of those 494 are here inside. So, to put the numbers back to Suffolk-specific numbers, roughly 214 million of that \$333 million is generated here in Suffolk County. The same study estimates that the arts and culture activity supports 4,905 jobs.

And then the 65% of that would be 3,188 jobs here in Suffolk County. And I'm not talking about artists and performers that are on stage, I'm talking about the jobs that exist because arts activity brings people into local businesses. So these are restaurant staff, hotel workers, stagehands, the boat keepers, graphic designers, printers, drivers name it. These are all a very broad mix of jobs that touches many of the sectors that you all support. The study also estimates that arts and culture activity on Long Island generates over \$234 million in personal income to residents. So that's \$152 million in Suffolk County. That's wages that are paid each year to Suffolk residents because of the arts and cultures activity. So this is money that people used to cover their rent and mortgages, groceries, childcare, transportation. You name it. And then finally, the activity generates tax revenues. So, Suffolk County Arts and cultural organizations generate \$12.3 million in local tax revenue, \$8.1 million in state revenue, and over \$32 million in federal revenue, and that's all tied to nonprofit arts and culture work. There's one other key point here that I want to point out. Over the last decade, employment in Long Island's arts and culture sector has grown 21.6%, so that's more than 5 times the overall job growth rate of 4.1 in our region. Even as our under 65 population has slightly declined. The number of independent artists and creative workers has nearly doubled.

So there you go. When we talk about the arts in Suffolk County, we're not talking about a luxury or an extra. These numbers are reflecting something everyone really already knows, that the arts create the kinds of places where people want to live, they want to work, and they want to spend time.

So, right now, you're probably thinking, like, okay, if the art's so great, why is this woman here telling me all these things? It's a fair question, and the answer is that even with all of this economic strength, Suffolk is receiving some of the lowest levels of state investment in New York. And that gap is costing us real dollars, real jobs, and real opportunities. Long Island makes up roughly 15% of the state's population, and when you look at the state's primary arts funding agency, the New York State Council on the Arts. Long Island receives only about 2.5 to 3% of the statewide grant dollars, and this is year after year after year after year. Similarly, the Red Sea, programs, arts-related projects on Long Island received only about 3.1% of our region's entire allocation, and a significant portion of that went to a single large capital project.

So we have a sector that is growing faster than the regional economy, a sector that is supporting thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in tax revenue, but are receiving a very small, embarrassingly small share of state investment compared to our size and contribution.

The chronic underinvestment reduces the economic potential of one of Long Island's fastest-growing sectors and limits opportunities for residents, artists, schools, and community organizations. And here's the unfortunate reality. I had this conversation a million times with local organizations.

They genuinely believe state grants are not winnable for them. Not because their work isn't strong, not because, you know, they don't believe in themselves, but because the system itself creates real barriers. Many don't apply because eligibility rules are confusing, the application language is intimidating, and there's no one to help them interpret what the state is actually asking for. Smaller organizations, you know, serving underprivileged communities on Long Island, you know, they don't have the capacity, they don't have grant staff. Individual artists are automatically ineligible unless they can find a non-profit fiscal sponsor willing to take on the liability. So, that's where the funding gap starts. Fewer applications are going in from our region, so fewer are coming back, and the underfunding gets worse. I have had conversations with the executive director of the New York State Council of the Arts.

She has plainly told me, flat out, Long Island is leaving money on the table. So, that lit a fire underneath.

So this past year, in 2025, in preparation for 2026 grants, I said, what if I try to fix the system that's leading to this underfunding? So, with no dedicated program funding or staff, I tested a small pilot focused on one of the state programs that provides \$10,000 grants to artists.

We stepped in, I met with every single interested applicant individually, I understood their project ideas, goals, readiness. We reviewed their proposals together. I was very honest. If they weren't ready, I told them so, I directed them to other places. And ultimately, we've submitted 14 applications, and 9 of those applications were funded.

I just want to give you a quick, direct comparison. Last year, only 4 artists across the entire island received this \$10,000 grant. So that was less than 1% of the total. This year, 19 artists from Long Island were funded, and 9 of those were directly supported through this pilot.

Still only 3.1%, it's not enough, but it is a five-fold increase in outcomes for our region. All nine awarded artists are from Suffolk County, all 9 awarded artists were first-time applicants to state funding.

We definitively know that when applicants get the right support, they win.

So, that's what this Long Island Grants Academy is supposed to be. In short, the Academy trains, supports, sponsors, and ensures compliance for Suffolk applicants. Then it tracks exactly how much funding comes back into our communities. So, with the \$50,000 investment from Suffolk County, we will launch a year one pilot that creates permanent structure.

And I have all of the activities in the Grant Academy are in the proposal, but, we'll provide group workshops and virtual grant clinics, one-on-one technical assistance.

LIA's fiscal sponsorship capacities, we can apply up to 50, applications, deliver full project management, develop and maintain a grants toolkit with, you know, things that will live on, templates, budget guides, all

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that kind of stuff. And in year one, we expect to support 15 to 20 Summit-based organizations and independent artists applying on their own.

And then up to 50 Suffolk-based artists and projects applying through the fiscal sponsorship.

This level of activity could realistically, and this is very conservative, bring back on the order of \$200,000 to \$500,000.

And because the Academy is building reusable tools, templates, and systems, and helping applicants gain skills they will use year after year, this return grows over time. The cost per successful application goes down, and the total amount of funding coming back to Suffolk goes up. So this is not, a one-off grant.

You all, Suffolk County, consistently invest in strategies that strengthen small businesses, expand tourism, and retain talent, and the arts are truly one of the most powerful and undervalued engines that are already contributing to your goals.

The data shows it clearly. Suffolk's creative economy, it's large, it's fast-growing, and it's deeply tied to local economic vitality. So this is a moment where a relatively modest county investment can correct long-standing funding disparities and drive measurable economic return.

The infrastructure is ready, the demand is high, and we've already proven that the model works. What we need now is a partnership that allows us to scale it. So, Suffolk has the chance to be seen statewide as the region that decided to stop accepting underinvestment as a given. Thank you so much for your time and consideration, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have. Questions from the board. I guess I have one question. So, if we fund the project.

Then, for next year, then at the end of the year, we'll get some sort of report? Yes, that's correct. So, the, the Grants Academy is, sort of structured around the grants calendar, so it's got a sort of a quick jumping-off point. There's a bit of urgency on it, because the NISPA grants, that was mostly what I'm talking about in this proposal, the guidelines come out in typically late April or early May to the deadline of late June, early July, so that's really when a lot of that work is happening. The decisions are, announced the middle of November. So, at the end of the year, you would receive, you know, all of the stats, all of the, you know, participants and everything. It'll be not just who applied, but actually the money that's received. Yeah, we just got the notifications, I think 3 weeks ago, and this year's numbers were also bad. Okay.

Cris: How long has this, alliance been in existence, or is this being created now?

LW: No, we were founded, in 2003 by Regent Roger Tillis.

CD: Okay.

CD: Nassau County, do they participate for their side, if you want to call out the, of the property line?

LW: So we served, we're a regional organization, so we serve both Suffolk and Nassau counties in all of our programming, but this direct, you know, this proposal is for Suffolk County organizations and Suffolk County artists. The opportunity is being presented to Nassau to fund, you know, their own version of this, but in no way will any dollar that's given to the Alliance for this program, you know, be directed towards Nassau County, artists and organizations.

CD: And besides the money that, comes from us and maybe Nassau and New York State, are there any other funding sources coming into the Alliance?

LW: Yeah, so we're funded, we're an arts service organization, we don't have, like, flashy programs that people don't come sit in our seats and watch great shows. We support the organizations that have that. So we have an interesting sort of structure where we don't have very many, like, forward-facing donors,

we do have a membership program, which is comprised of about 127 arts and cultural organizations from across the island, as well as hundreds of artists. But we do apply for grants, we get state funding. Unfortunately, we don't, get county funding yet, but I'm confident that we will soon. And then private donors, and then, you know, private foundations and things like that. So, all that funding goes into our operations, and our operations are based in these types of technical assistance programs.

Greg Casamento: I guess the only other question I have for Kelly is, we have the funds in the budget for this, right? We are evaluating that, we believe so. At this point, we do. Okay.

Kelly Murphy: It would be funded in 2026.

Brian Beedenbender: Just one quick question. So, the 15% to 3% cap, can you put dollars to that?

LW: We're 15% of the population, but we're getting 3% of the funding for this sort of stuff.

BB: What does that mean in dollars?

LW: So, 2.8%, which was the allocation for 2025, was \$2.5 million. And then so it's 400 and something million dollars.

BB: Okay Thank you.

SL: Any other questions?

LW: And unfortunately, sorry not to jump in, but, while we grew the artists category, as I said, the other category or support for organizations actually went down, so it's less money this year.

Kevin Harvey: Just one question. If we approve this, would we be your largest funding stream for Suffolk County?

LW: Yes, for Suffolk County? That's correct.

SL: What is your overall, operational budget? \$123,000 a year.

LW: It's just me. I'm the only employee at the moment, but we contract out, so the program is, is, you know, designed to bring in people who are professional grant writers and, you know, consultants and things like that.

SL: Do you have a plan for looking for other funding sources, so that, you know, this is not a continuous request?

LW: Yes, yes, definitely. I think because of the urgency, because if we don't do something now, the next cycle is going to come up on us very quickly. This is a smaller version of, I think, what this could be, and I think, you know, doing this test pilot, being able to get those numbers and say, here's the percentages, here's the growth. There are definitely other opportunities for funding outside of, of, you know, county funding.

Most certainly, even if we go after other grants. But it'll be good to have a solid year under our belt of doing this program, because my pilot was really just sort of off the cuff.

SL: So, Kelly, for today, this was just a presentation.

KM: That's correct.

SL: You're still evaluating the budget for EDC to see if this could fit for 2026, correct?

KM: Yes, we believe it fits the budget, however we are working on a program for providing grants administration and reporting. There are a few questions regarding the budget with the Wyandanch Tech Center so we would have to evaluate both of those, components. I suggest that we revisit it at the next meeting.

## **MINUTES**

The minutes of the October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025 Board of Directors Meeting was presented.

After further discussion and:

Upon a motion by Brian Beedenbender, seconded by Greg Casamento, it was:

RESOLVED, to approve the Minutes of the October 23,2025 meeting of the Board of Directors,

Unanimously carried 5/0.

The Meeting adjourned at 12:36 pm.