Minutes
Advisory Committee on International Trade
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
August 4, 2026

VEDP
9th Floor, Board Room
901 E. Cary St., Suite 900
Richmond, VA 23219

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Mike Ligon, Chair of the VEDP Advisory Committee on International Trade.

Members Present:	Bob Feeser
	Secretary Frazier
	Anne Marie Lacourse
	Mike Ligon, Chair
	Connie Loughhead
	David White
Remote:	Mike Coleman
	John Huddle
Members Absent:	Hobey Bauhan
Staff Present:	Stephanie Agee Lindsey Bertozzi Josh Kaplan Julie Richmond John Sauls Mary Wood
Guests Present:	Michel Zajur, CEO and Founder, Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Caroline Buscaglia, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Commonwealth of Virginia
Public Present:	N/A

Welcome and Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Ligon welcomed Committee members, VEDP staff, and guests. He recognized

Michel Zajur, CEO and Founder of the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and noted that Connie Loughhead had recently been appointed to the Committee as liaison to the VEDP Board following the completion of Will Sessoms' VEDP Board term.

Public Comments

Chairman Ligon solicited comments from members of the public in attendance. There were none.

Review and Approval of March 10, 2026 Meeting Minutes

After review of the March 10, 2026 meeting minutes, Chairman Ligon requested a motion to approve. Bob Feeser made the motion, Anne Marie Lacourse seconded it, and the minutes were unanimously approved by all Committee members present.

Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Presentation

Following an introduction by Chairman Ligon, Michel Zajur provided an overview of the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, founded in 2000 to expand business opportunities for Virginia and the Hispanic community. He highlighted the U.S. Latino economy's estimated $4.4 trillion GDP and described the Chamber's role in supporting Hispanic entrepreneurs, connecting Virginia with Latin American markets, and building relationships among businesses, government, education, and communities.

Mr. Zajur discussed the Chamber's work with corporations, government agencies, educational institutions, nonprofits, and global companies, and shared examples involving Goya Foods, Bon Secours, and Panama Canal-related opportunities. Committee discussion focused on potential collaboration between the Chamber and VEDP, including connecting Mr. Zajur with VEDP's Investment team and leveraging the Chamber's Latin America relationships to support investment, trade, and agriculture opportunities. Chairman Ligon thanked Mr. Zajur for his presentation.

Agriculture and Forestry Exports Update

Secretary Frazier discussed implementation of the Agriculture and Forestry Trade Plan and introduced Caroline Buscaglia, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry. She reviewed Executive Order Five, which outlines strategies to diversify export markets, maximize federal resources for exporters, strengthen state-level collaboration, improve export logistics and infrastructure, and elevate Virginia's global visibility for agriculture and forestry products.

Discussion focused on priority export markets, a planned NASDA inbound mission, expanded use of federal resources for exporters, and formal monthly coordination between VDACS and VEDP. Secretary Frazier also highlighted the need to strengthen export logistics and infrastructure and elevate Virginia's agriculture and forestry products through strategic trade missions, engagement with foreign diplomatic corps, company outreach, and a planned Virginia trade and export conference at the Port of Virginia in early 2027.

International Trade Update

Stephanie Agee provided several updates on the work of VEDP International Trade. She shared VEDP's FY27 trade missions and trade shows calendar. She reported that VEDP received an $847,000 State Trade Expansion Program award from the U.S. Small Business Administration on July 15 after multiple delays. The program supports eligible Virginia small businesses through travel reimbursement, website optimization, and other export-related expenses.

Ms. Agee also reported that all corrective actions related to the Office of the State Inspector General's audit report on International Trade had been completed. VEDP revised its outcome methodology and survey questions to capture total international sales and the percentage supported by VEDP. Surveys are currently underway, with results expected to be aggregated in September. Committee members discussed survey participation and data accuracy. June trade data was also reviewed, including increased imports, modest export growth, and Canada's continued position as Virginia's leading export destination and source of imports.

Supply Chain Optimization Program Update

John Sauls provided an overview of the Supply Chain Optimization Program, a one-year program for eligible Virginia businesses that offers customized planning, reimbursement support, expert resources, market research, in-country assistance, training, and partner connections. He reported that the program has supported 88 Virginia companies across 16 industries since 2022 and recently received the NASBITE Program Excellence Award.

Committee discussion covered company recruitment, supply-chain sourcing, inventory management, the use of AI tools, and sustainable supply chains. Secretary Frazier offered to connect the program with additional companies and agencies.

Committee Discussion

Committee members discussed future VEDP Board engagement and the importance of reinforcing the International Trade team's services and value. Members also requested renewed discussion of cargo and infrastructure opportunities at Dulles International Airport. Ms. Agee agreed to follow up with Eric Jehu, Vice President of Transportation and Logistics at VEDP. Chairman Ligon encouraged continued engagement between meetings.

Adjournment

Chair Ligon thanked participants for their insights and engagement on trade issues, and the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.