

**Minutes
Advisory Committee on International Trade
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
September 4, 2025**

**Virginia International Gateway
1000 Virginia International Gateway Boulevard
Portsmouth, VA 23703**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Mike Ligon, Chairman of the VEDP Advisory Committee on International Trade.

Members Present:

Hobey Bauhan
Michael Coleman
Bob Feeser
John Huddle
Mike Ligon, Chair
Secretary Lohr
David White

Members Absent:

Anne Marie Lacourse
Will Sessoms

Staff Present:

Stephanie Agee
Lindsey Bertozzi
Josh Kaplan
Julie Richmond
Lee Sanderson
Adam Watkins
Mary Wood

Guests Present:

Stephen Edwards, CEO and Executive Director of the Virginia Port Authority (VPA), Connie Loughhead, President, Des Champs Technologies and VEDP Board Member, Kishan Shenoy, Vice President International Merchandising, Perdue Agribusiness

Public Present:

N/A

Welcome and Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Mike Ligon welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:03 a.m. and commented on the ever-changing landscape of international trade and its current uncertainty. He reminded everyone that the overall goal of the Advisory Committee is to assist VEDP and the Commonwealth on matters related to trade and suggested that the Committee could improve working together as a team to provide Trade solutions for Virginia.

Public Comments

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

Review and Approval of June 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes

After a review of the June 10, 2025, minutes, Chairman Ligon requested a motion to approve. David White made a motion. The motion was seconded by Bob Feeser and was unanimously approved by all Committee members present.

The Port of Virginia

Stephen Edwards, CEO and Executive Director of the Virginia Port Authority (VPA), provided an update on the operations of the Port of Virginia. In starting his presentation, Mr. Edwards referred to the port as "America's most modern gateway," given its high level of automation and using the most advanced cargo-moving equipment. He noted that Virginia's ranking by CNBC in terms of infrastructure improved this year, notably due to improvements the port has made and activities such as the widening of I-64. Mr. Edwards addressed the uncertainty caused by recent announcements regarding tariffs, and the ongoing changes to those that have been announced. He said stability would be preferred, by both the port and its customers, but they anticipate the uncertainty will continue for a while. He mentioned the impact the tariffs on certain trading partners such as India and Brazil are having on port customers, as some are choosing to hold in investment plans for warehouses and other facilities until they see where the tariffs end up. He also mentioned that because it is a major contributor to Virginia's economy, issues that impact the port also impact Virginia overall.

As the presentation continued, Mr. Edwards focused on three major focal points for the port currently: (1) improved safety record based on a collaborative approach for problem solving between the port and partners such as Customs and Border Protection; (2) increased volumes, which have already been improving dramatically; and (3) performance efficiency, including with regard to truck turn times, rail dwelling for containers, and crane moves, which are also performing very well.

Mr. Edwards then presented on the additional investments the port is making, including in its Richmond facility, and several new initiatives they are implementing or that will have a positive impact on the port, including the expansion of the Hampton Roads Bridget Tunnel, upgrades to the North Norfolk International Terminal, and installing modern electric equipment for some port operations.

ACIT members asked questions and made some comments. Hobey Bauhan asked about how the port compares with others in terms of turnaround time and handling traffic congestion in the area. Mr. Edwards responded that the current turn times are very good and compete well with nearby ports. the congestion and its impact on the region.

Chairman Ligon stated his strong support for the port and considers it to be Virginia's biggest asset. He referenced one of North Carolina's proposed road expansions, extending from the port thru Virginia to Raleigh and asked what the impact would be. Mr. Edwards answered that it would be a positive enhancement, and Virginia would benefit from it.

Mr. Bauhan asked if Mr. Edwards had a sense of competition from other ports when it came to poultry and meat. He replied that currently the port is not strong in these categories as there is limited cold storage in the area. He said that Philadelphia dominates in that category and also mentioned that bananas and fruit companies like Del Monte run their own ships mostly out of Baltimore or Wilmington.

Bob Feeser inquired what Mr. Edwards would want more or less of in terms of additional investments or businesses in the area to make the port more competitive. Mr. Edwards said that additional agricultural facilities designed for transloading, like some already under development, will have a major impact and make the port more attractive for agricultural exports. He also said additional infrastructure investments, such as tunnel and bridge improvements, will also have a positive impact.

Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) Audit Update

Stephanie Agee, Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, VEDP reported that Virginia's Office of the State Inspector General recently completed an audit of VEDP's International Trade Division. It was the first time that any division of VEDP was subject to an audit of this kind.

Ms. Agee shared that there were no findings identified related to the management of the VALET Program and how funds are reimbursed to companies. There were several findings in the report related to limitations on how VEDP collects, calculates, and reports on data related to outcomes. Two opportunities for improvement were also included in the report. She said that she shared the report with the VEDP's Board Finance and Audit Committee and that the team will be working to respond to and resolve each of the findings in the report. She committed to sharing updates on those actions at future ACIT meetings.

Closed Session

Chairman Ligon requested that the Committee move into a closed meeting at 10:04 a.m. A motion was made by Mike Coleman and seconded by David White. Josh Kaplan, Assistant General Counsel, voiced the following motion for adoption by the Committee to enter into a closed meeting. The following motion was unanimously adopted by all the Committee members present.

I MOVE THAT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AUTHORITY CONVENE A CLOSED MEETING TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC STRATEGIES PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION

A 50 OF §2.2-3711 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA, WHICH ALLOWS FOR THE DISCUSSION OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN THAT WOULD REVEAL TO COMMONWEALTH'S COMPETITORS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THE STRATEGIES INTENDED TO BE DEPLOYED BY THE COMMONWEALTH.

Upon return to the open meeting, the Committee members considered the following certification:

DO YOU CERTIFY, THAT TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, (i) ONLY PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS LAWFULLY EXEMPTED FROM THE OPEN MEETING REQUIREMENTS OF FOIA WERE DISCUSSED IN THE CLOSED MEETING, AND (ii) ONLY SUCH MATTERS AS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE MOTION TO GO INTO THE CLOSED MEETING WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED DURING THE CLOSED MEETING?

The Committee approved the foregoing certification by roll call vote, bringing the Committee out of the closed meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Yeas: Chairman Mike Ligon, Hobey Bauhan, Michael Coleman, Bob Feeser, John Huddle, Secretary Lohr, Connie Loughhead, David White

Nays: None

Industry Perspectives from Committee Members

Chairman Ligon requested the Committee forward any specific topics they would like to discuss ahead of December 2, 2025, ACIT meeting so they may be included in the agenda. As always, he thanked everyone for their valuable industry perspectives.

Adjournment and Tour of Virginia International Gateway

Before concluding the Chairman Ligon remarked that the next Advisory Committee meeting would take place in December and looked forward to their next discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.