

## ***Laurens County Development Corporation***

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – March 21, 2017

### Attendees:

Stan Bryson, Jon Caime, Mayor John Carter, Jeff Field, Randy Garrett, Mike Norrick, David Pitts, Rodney Smith, Mayor John Stankus, Frank Stovall, John Young, and Collie Lehn

### Guests:

Marvin Moss (City of Clinton)

### Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Becca Sturgeon, Sandy Cruickshanks

### Press:

Vic MacDonald (Chronicle), Billy Dunlap (goLaurens.com)

Chairman Field called the meeting to order at 12:01 and gave the invocation.

### Minutes and Financials

Chairman Field asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. Randy Garrett made the motion to approve and Stan Bryson seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Field then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 11/8/16 meeting. John Young made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Mayor Carter seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for year-end, December 2016 and January and February 2017. The financials were accepted as information only.

### Executive Director's Report – Jonathan Coleman

- For year-end information, an annual report was mailed to everyone soon after the annual meeting held in January and plans are to continue this every year going forward. For a 2016 in review: There were 195 total new jobs announced along with \$114.1 million in new investment. The annual unemployment rate in 2009 of 11.7% has dropped to 5.3% in 2016. The average hourly wage has moved from \$13.12 in 2009 to \$15.70 in 2016. Some of the highlights covered is the Clinton Spec Building and the ZF Transmissions apprenticeship program. A statistic not covered in the report but is important to share is that 2016 FILOT revenue (which is the industrial tax base for the county) was \$7.24 million – In 2013 it was \$4.08 million. This is a total number before any allocations are made.
- Fukoku America announced their expansion plans in February of \$13.9 million in investment and 65 new jobs.
- For new prospect activity - RFI update: 12 since beginning of the year / 9 – at the same point in 2016.
- The annual investor/industry appreciation golf tournament is planned for April 13.
- New marketing initiatives:
  - The LCDC will launch a new & enhanced website in March. It has a completely different look and includes a demographic data center which provides extensive opportunities for Laurens County and labor shed research. This is a feature supported through Avalanche Consulting and is updated automatically with the most current information available.

- Looking forward, less investment will be made on print advertising and more emphasis will be placed on strategic initiatives with the website such as Google Analytics. This will optimize the presence of the website with online search engines.
- Everyone is well aware of the apprenticeship program at ZF Transmissions and the efforts our schools are making to provide them with the students they need. With the publicity generated from their program we have seen interest building with some of our other industries to also implement a similar apprenticeship model. With the unemployment rate currently at 4.1%, it will become even more important for companies to grow their own talent.

*Business & Education Partnership – Lynn Finley*

This new initiative is being created to bring our Laurens County top level educators and business leaders together on a routine basis to share ideas and needs in a common goal of improving educational outcomes and matching student employability to local career opportunities. Staff has been calling on key industry leaders, school superintendents, and Piedmont Tech explaining this initiative and asking for support. An event will be hosted in late April as a kickoff. Two individuals are committed to speak and share their personal experiences of being part of similar groups in other areas of the state and the benefits to the community. Expected benefits are: identifying apprenticeship opportunities; enhancing the partnership between industries, school districts, and Piedmont Tech; more involvement opportunities for students and leader mentoring; and additional networking with industry and business leaders.

*Laurens County Branding – Jon Caime*

Laurens County is beginning the process of identifying a brand for the entire county. Meetings are being held all around the county with groups consisting of various demographics to share ideas. A commitment has been made to work with the Heritage Corridor Group which plans to begin work in late April / early May. The end goal is to have a product that is a unifying brand for Laurens County.

*Other Reports:*

Frank Stovall (City of Clinton) – The pad is complete along the frontage road for future retail development, the I-26 Commerce Park is coming along and the Clinton Spec Building.

Jon Caime (Laurens County) – Should see some plants beginning to go in on the Exit 9 beautification project toward the end of March.

John Young (City of Laurens) – The Arby’s construction is well underway.

Mayor Carter (Town of Gray Court) – Mogul will be hosting the grand opening of their first plant in the US on March 23.

Collie Lehn (City of Clinton) – Acknowledged that Frank Stovall has accepted a new position in Virginia and will be leaving in May.

Chairman Jeff Field – Recognized that the LCDC is losing two board members – Greg Alexander and Frank Stovall. Their experience and dedication will be missed not only on the LCDC Board but also in the community. With the transition of Frank Stovall, that will leave an opening on the Executive Committee of Treasurer. As handled in the past, a nominating committee will be appointed and will consist of Stan Bryson, Randy Garrett, and Steve West. Chairman Field charged the committee to report back to the full board at the May board meeting with a nomination to fill the open position of Treasurer on the Executive Committee.

*Executive Session:*

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn S. Finley