

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

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – May 21, 2019

### Attendees:

Justin Benfield, Stan Bryson, Jon Caime, Rusty Denning, Jeff Field, Randy Garrett, Randy Lis, Amanda Munyan, Rodney Smith, Steve West, John Young, Collie Lehn

### Guests:

Marc Metcalf (Upstate SC Alliance)

### Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Robertson, Sandy Cruickshanks

### Press:

Emil Finley (WLBG), Vic MacDonald (Chronicle)

Chairman Garrett called the meeting to order at 12:15 and gave the invocation.

### Minutes and Financials

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

Chairman Garrett then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 3/19/19 meeting. Justin Benfield made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Jeff Field seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for March and April. The financials were accepted as information only.

### Prospect Activity Report – Jonathan Coleman

Mr. Coleman began his report by sharing that a drone had been purchased by the LCDC with a portion of grant money allocated for new technology and it is available to anyone on the board for needed aerial photographs and video.

Recent prospect activity has increased since the last report to the board in March. There have been 23 RFIs to date compared to 27 during the same time period in 2018. There seems to be an uptick in received RFIs but there is still concern around the new tariffs being implemented. There are several industries in the county that it greatly impacts. To date, \$53.4 million has announced in new investment and 153 jobs which doubles the job numbers from 2018 and is close to the investment number.

Secretary Hitt was in county last week for a meeting with ZF and was able to also include a visit with a prospect touring that day.

There is a report on the wage growth for individual counties in the state included in the board packets. This report shows Laurens County has experienced tremendous wage increases over the past 10 years which is a direct correlation to the amount of job growth. This report also states wages paid out in Laurens County and shows an almost 60% growth rate.

Boeing representatives participated at the last Chamber "In The Know Breakfast" hosted jointly with the LCDC in April. This was part of their annual statewide initiative to promote manufacturing careers and STEM education to communities and students. During their presentation they offered the opportunity for the LCDC to host a group of Laurens County leaders to visit and tour their Charleston facility. Staff is exploring options to visit Boeing and to also tour the SC Ports Authority later this year. More information will be provided as those plans come together.

Lynn attended a luncheon event hosted by the Upstate SC Alliance in Columbia for the SC Department of Commerce International Offices. The Upstate SC Alliance also recently launched a new upstate talent attraction initiative at their annual meeting and John Lummus will be presenting that information at an upcoming LCDC Board meeting. Whitney attended an Upstate SC Alliance lunch event hosting international consul generals and trade representatives from around the world. The recent quarterly class on community development of the SCEDA Institute was hosted in Clinton at the pharmacy school and included a reception Thursday evening at the Cotton Loft. The class consists of about 55 individuals from across the state.

#### Product Development Update – Jonathan Coleman

Mr. Coleman provided a product development update including photos showing progress. He highlighted multiple areas of development around the county:

- A new road extension in the Clinton I-26 Commerce Park
- Clinton Spec Building
- Hunter Industrial Park Spec Building (closing on June 7 with Agracel to lease to Muffin Mam which will be 100,000 sq ft)
- TruCore site which is also in Hunter Park and will be 115,000 sq ft
- The Connexial Center road has been finished and soil testing work has begun for the power substation and the sewer pump station. Planning has also begun on the offsite water improvements which will be a 12" water line to run about 9,000 feet. Signage and landscaping at the entrance is also being planned.

Another update was provided for the Owings Park area. Using additional funds held for the park maintenance, work has begun on replacing the outer signage panels on the main interstate sign which is showing much deterioration after about 20 years.

Work has also begun to apply for Santee Cooper grant funds in assisting to extend the electrical service and loop in Hunter Industrial Park which would open an additional 150 acres and have infrastructure on site and ready for future growth.

#### Industry & Workforce Dev Update – Lynn Finley

Ms. Finley reported that the job fair held on April 25 had been a successful event. About 20 employers, plus multiple support service agencies, participated and at least 200 adults and 30 students attended. One company shared that they had spoken with 127 individuals, took 66 applications and scheduled 19 interviews. Planning has also begun on the 2019 Laurens / Newberry Business & Industry Showcase. The date is set for October 8 and will be hosted this year in Newberry at the Piedmont Tech campus.

#### Marketing Update – Whitney Robertson

Ms. Robertson began by sharing that Laurens County was featured in the winter 2019 edition of *Southern Business & Development* magazine in a spotlight on FDI Clusters of small and medium-sized cities in the south. Working with the Upstate SC Alliance, a talent attraction/workforce tab will be added to the LCDC website and will include the Upstate SC Alliance initiative called Move Upstate.

An update was provided on the LCDC's website analytics:

- The audience is almost directly split between organic search results and direct traffic. 48% search and 42% direct. Around 9% is social media referrals and the remaining 1% is referral traffic
  - **Direct traffic** is most often the result of a user entering a URL into their browser or using a bookmark to directly access the site. Essentially, **Direct** sessions occur any time Google **Analytics** cannot determine another referring source or channel.
  - **Organic traffic** are those visits which are tracked by another entity — usually because they have arrived through **search engines** — but also from other sources.
  - **Referral traffic** is traffic that comes from outside of organic search. It can be a link found in blogs and online articles or ads.
- Almost 90% of our audience are new visitors to the site
  - Just over the past month alone, traffic/visits have increased by over 1,300%. There were 385 users visit vs. a previous count of 26.

- Based on this same one-month timeframe, in the past month 86% of the traffic comes from the US, while 9% is coming from France. The rest is spread out over 8 other countries at 1 to less than 1 percentages.

A time lapse camera was recently installed at the Connexial Center to capture the Phase I progress of development. The camera provides time lapse footage and sends a new photo to the cloud every 10 minutes. Images can be collapsed into a 30-second video to reflect the entire process. A link and more information about this feature and updates on the Connexial Center will be sent to everyone in the near future.

LCDC Board Update – Jonathan Coleman

As an update from information provided at the March board meeting, Mr. Coleman was glad to report that the 2 school districts had been able to work out a way to maintain their board seat with the LCDC. Both districts play an integral part in the mission of the LCDC and the community as a whole and their support is much appreciated.

Audit Update – Jonathan Coleman

Auditors from McKinley Cooper were onsite in April to begin the work for the annual 2018 audit. That report will be reported at the July board meeting.

Other Reports:

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn S. Finley