

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

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – September 17, 2019

### Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Dan Blakely, Stan Bryson, Jon Caime, Jeff Field, Randy Garrett, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Jim Lollis, Amanda Munyan, Dr. David O’Shields, Dr. David Pitts, John Young, Collie Lehn

### Guests:

John Culbreath & Brad Sanderson (Thomas & Hutton), Brown Patterson (County Council)

### Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Robertson, Sandy Cruickshanks

### Press:

Wyatt Mattison (WLBG), Vic MacDonald (Chronicle)

Chairman Garrett called the meeting to order at 12:03 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 Justin Benfield seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Garrett then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 7/16/19 meeting. John Young made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Stan Bryson seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

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

### I-385 Corridor Study – Brad Sanderson, Thomas & Hutton

In a partnership between the LCDC and Laurens County, Thomas & Hutton Engineering was hired to conduct a traffic study of the Highway 14 and I-385 corridor between Gray Court and Fountain Inn. Brad Sanderson presented the findings of existing traffic conditions, challenges and possible improvements. Existing challenges to confirm were Exit 19 connectivity to Old Laurens Rd, Abercrombie and Old Laurens Rd, and Exit 22. A major constraint identified was the railroad running in the middle of this corridor. Traffic counts were collected in May 2019 at 16 different intersections at midweek AM and PM peak hours along with 24-hour classification counts at 3 locations and a SC DOT continuous count station on I-385, north of Exit 19. After performing modeling on current conditions, findings showed all locations at a Level of Service (LOS) of C or better. (Ranking of LOS = A is best / F is worst) Peak delays were found at Abercrombie Rd. and the northbound merge point at Exit 19. Traffic projections were then established at 3, 10 and 20 years out. By year 2022, LOS at 2 count locations fell to D and 2 others fell to E or F. By year 2029, LOS at a new count location was categorized at D and 7 others were categorized as E or F. By year 2039, LOS was categorized as E or F at 12 count locations within this corridor. Mr. Sanderson went on to present several recommended improvements. At Exit 22: relocation of S Woods Dr. into Old Laurens Rd. along with widening and the addition of lanes and several traffic lights in the area. Projected cost to make recommended improvement would be \$4.02 million. At Exit 19 and the southern portion of the study: improvements needed to Exit 19 interchange and would need a further detailed study of an Interchange Modification or Justification Study (IJR) and including possibly the modification or need for a new interchange. Cost of that is estimated at \$57 million. The estimated cost of an IJR is \$1.7 million. The recommendation was made to continue submitting for BUILD Transportation grants and to pursue SC DOT planning/funding opportunities through the SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank.

### Product Development Update – Jonathan Coleman

Bids on the 150,000 sq. ft. spec building at the Connexial Center are in and are being reviewed. The sign entrance is being installed with landscaping beginning soon. At Hunter Industrial Park, TureCore and Muffin Mam are on track to be completed and in operation by the end of the year. And, at Clinton 26 there is a Letter of Intent (LOI) on that spec building.

### Prospect Activity Report – Jonathan Coleman

Have seen a slowdown in overall prospect activity through the summer with a slight increase in August. Since the last board meeting there have been 12 RFIs received with 3 site visits. There are 39 to date on the year compared to 44 at the same point in 2018. The Upstate SC Alliance will be hosting their fall site consultant event in later September and Mr. Coleman will be traveling on a marketing trip with the Upstate SC Alliance to the United Kingdom. Meetings with over 24 companies are planned along with the US Consulate to build additional relationships. Not to endorse any specific political party or candidate but the LCDC was invited to help host democratic presidential candidate Congressman Tim Ryan of Ohio during his recent visit to the county. He toured the CAM and one of our industries.

### Industry & Workforce Dev Update – Lynn Finley

\*ZF held their annual apprentice signing event on August 6 at the CAM. They welcomed a class of 10 new apprentices, 5 were recent graduates from Laurens County high schools. A new addition to the event was the first annual Darren Rudley Award presented to the most outstanding apprentice after their first year in the program. Gabrielle Aldridge from Clinton was the first recipient.

\*An update was provided on the closing of Shaw Industries. According to the HR director, by late August 75% to 80% of hourly associates had found new employment. Several of the hiring companies have shared positive comments about the individuals they hired from the onsite job fairs.

\*Continental Automotive is still on track to close their facility in Fountain Inn in late December. The LCDC has met with company leadership and state support partners – SC Rapid Response and SC Works. Employee information sessions have been held onsite along with continued sessions for career coaching and resume assistance. Onsite job fairs are being planned for mid-October.

\*Planning continues for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Laurens & Newberry Counties Business & Industry Showcase. It will be held on Tuesday, October 8 in Newberry for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in both counties attending.

### Marketing Update & Higher Opportunity Reveal – Whitney Robertson

\*As part of the workforce development initiative, Laurens County is partnering with Greenwood County to assist with the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual STEAM Festival to be held in spring 2020 and will be called the iMAGINE Lakelands STEAM Festival.

\*At the last board meeting John Lummus presented on the new initiative from the Upstate SC Alliance called Move Upstate SC. The LCDC was invited to do a social media take over in August for a week and had the opportunity to showcase the great qualities of Laurens County – great places to eat, how to move up in your career, things to enjoy, and green spaces were some of the features.

\*For a website traffic update, almost 87% of traffic to the LCDC website are new visitors, 60% of which are from organic search and about 40% are directly typing in the address. Most traffic originated from the US followed by Canada, India and the UK.

\*Work is complete on the updates for the Higher Opportunity video and was revealed to the board meeting attendees.

### Strategic Plan Proposal – Jonathan Coleman

The LCDC has not had an updated strategic plan process in about 5 years and Mr. Coleman recommended that it is time to begin that process and to also do it in a different way than in the past. He shared that staff has received a proposal from Avalanche Consulting which is a company that specializes in working with economic development organizations. The proposal includes working with staff and the board, managing a community survey, holding a local council member retreat for elected officials, and hosting in person focus group

interviews with community members. From this gathered information and researched data, Avalanche will make recommendations of target industries along with a new strategic plan. They also will provide an implementation plan with suggestions of performance metrics for the organization. The cost of this planning process is \$95,000 and will take about 7 months to complete. The SC Power Team has committed to paying \$25,000 of this cost leaving a balance of \$70,000. The executive committee has been involved with this proposal and the recommendation is to pay for the new strategic plan out of the multicounty park reinvestment fund. The funds are governed by a resolution and this proposal meets the qualifications set forth in the resolution. The current balance is approximately \$700,000. The recommendation is to take \$70,000 from the multicounty park reinvestment fund to put with the \$25,000 committed by the SC Power Team to commit to this strategic planning process with Avalanche Consulting. Stan Bryson made a motion to accept the recommendation presented by Mr. Coleman and Jeff Field seconded the motion. After a time of discussion Chairman Garrett called for a vote which was unanimously approved.

Other Reports:

\*The LCDC annual meeting date has been set for January 21.

\*Dr. Pitts commented on the need for improved landscaping at the entrance to the Professional Park where the LCDC and Chamber offices are located. Mr. Coleman met with Billy Wilson from the County and a landscaper to discuss how to improve the appearance of the park entrance. The plan going forward may be to remove all the overgrowth and just plant grass for now. Dr. Pitts commented that the original plan was for the County to maintain and he would like to see a joint effort between the County and the LCDC to improve the appearance and possibly install a more attractive monument style sign.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn S. Finley