

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – November 17, 2020

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Dan Blakely, Stan Bryson, Randy Garrett, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Amanda Munyan, David Pitts, Mayor Nathan Senn, Steve West, Brown Patterson

Guests:

Sam Leaman & Cason Wright (Upper Savannah COG), Jimmy Capps (CNNGA)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Vic MacDonald (Chronicle)

Chairman Garrett called the meeting to order at 12:07 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 David Pitts seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Garrett then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 09/15/20 meeting. David Pitts 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 September and October 2020. The financials were accepted as information only.

2021 Budget Approval – David Pitts, Treasurer

Finance Committee Chairman, Dr. David Pitts, directed everyone's attention to the proposed 2021 budget previously provided by email and included in the information packets. He reported that the proposed budget was coming as a unanimous recommendation from the finance committee and does not require a second. After asking for discussion and questions, Chairman Garrett called for a vote and the 2021 budget was approved unanimously.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- Lynn Finley began with an update on the job fair that was held on October 15 in Fountain Inn Farmer's Market. This was a joint effort between the SC Works teams from Laurens, Greenville and Spartanburg Counties. There were 24 companies present – almost half (11) were from Laurens County. It was attended by 201 job seekers.
- As an update the latest unemployment rate published at this time is through September and Laurens County dropped to 4.8% which is very encouraging and lower than the state's rate of 5.1%.
- Specific industry update:
 - On Sept 29, Norbord and ZF Transmissions made a PPE donation to both school districts of masks and hand sanitizer.
 - And again ZF – The Ten at the Top is having a virtual event in November recognizing "Unsung Heroes" for their work in supporting the community during COVID. The LCDC nominated Michael Morris, the HR Director, who was very instrumental in supporting his people at ZF and pulling state and local teams together in efforts to promote safety and slowing the spread in the community.

-The LCDC held the Spring Industry and Investor Appreciation golf tournament on Oct 7. Thank you to those of you who participated and supported this annual event. It was a great day with all 24 original teams signed up participating. Because of COVID some aspects had to be handled differently, but it still turned out successfully.

-The 2020 wage survey link for manufacturers is still open. The plan is to close that the end of week and then compile the data. It appears to be about the same number of companies that responded last year so it should be a good comparison.

- The 2021 board meeting schedule will be sent out in the coming weeks so members can start marking 2021 calendars.

Economic Development Activity – Jon Coleman

-Jon Coleman began by sharing the announcement of the new company locating to the Fountain Inn area – Setterstix. The investment is \$11.7 million and 80 new jobs in Woodfield Industrial Park. It is a German, family-owned company doing business since the 1920s making paper sticks. This takes the 2020 totals to 200 total jobs and \$56.9 million in investment. Both numbers are higher than announced results in 2019.

-For activity – there have been 42 RFIs received to date (47 in same period in 2019). The flow of activity has been picking up in 4th quarter. There are a couple of current projects the LCDC is competing on where the County is included in the final 2 or 3 site locations.

-As a product development update, the process has begun with the Site Selection Group and the SC Department of Commerce on what is being called the Northside Site which is located on Hwy 221 near Hunter Industrial Park. The Site Selection Group is now working on their certification process and will make development recommendations. The Connexial Center continues to progress well. The spec building is now finished and will feature in a time lapse video Whitney will show the board later in the meeting.

Marketing / Outreach Update – Whitney Lagrange

-Whitney Lagrange shared that she continues to work on taking drone footage to build on available video resources. This has proven to be an invaluable asset with the increase of virtual site visits and tours. Ms. Lagrange recently spent an entire day across the county taking drone footage to be used for the #Flyover Friday social media campaign as well as upload to the LCDC YouTube channel. These posts highlight available buildings, sites and quality of life around the county.

-Board member spotlights using the #BoardMemberMonday campaign will continue throughout the year.

-The annual report for this year will be created electronically and information is being gathered for that development.

-Recently the LCDC began working with Brenda Stewart of Laurens County Buzz purchasing advertising, posting articles and recommending new tags for economic development topics. This is a new online media channel in the county.

-Work continues on promoting the #WearItSC social media campaign encouraging citizens to wear a mask to help slow the spread of COVID. Promotional images are included in the board slide show.

-The Upstate SC Alliance has started a new campaign that ties in to their MoveUp initiative called SkillUp. The website is www.SkillUpSC.com. This initiative is directed at people who are unemployed or maybe underemployed and could move to a better opportunity by gaining some new skills. This resource guides people to new opportunities or fields that can be achieved with 12 months or less in training. This new resource will also be shared with organizations in county that have direct contact with people who fit into this demographic.

Strategic Implementation Plan Approval – Jon Coleman

-A copy of the strategic implementation plan was provided to attendees outlining a roadmap for staff to use as a working document. Many of the recommendations that were to be made requires a lot of collaboration and community involvement. Because of limitations due to COVID impacts, the team at Ernst & Young developed a specific plan for the LCDC staff for the next 9 months. When COVID impacts allow, the LCDC will revisit the original intent of the plan and kick off the full recommendations at that point. Stan

Bryson made a motion for the board to approve the recommended implementation staff strategic plan and was seconded by Steve West. The board unanimously approved the recommended staff plan.

Nominating Committee Appointments – Randy Garrett, Chairman

Chairman Garrett stated that it is time for the LCDC Board to elect new officers which is done every two years per the bylaws. A nominating committee needs to be formed to take the lead on this process and bring back a slate of proposed officers to the board for consideration. Chairman Garrett appointed Stan Bryson, Justin Benfield, and Dan Blakely to serve on that committee. Mr. Coleman will convene that committee to begin the process.

Annual Meeting Plans – Jonathan Coleman

-The decision has been made to host this year's annual meeting virtually by Zoom. Jennifer Vernon with Ernst & Young will speak to share more about the progress of the strategic plan with next steps along with the LCDC's year in review. It will be held on January 19 at 3:30. That is when it was planned to approve the next slate of officers. Due to the virtual nature of this meeting, an email will be sent to board members after the nominating committee meets in December with the nominations and to request any additional nominations. Then the board will be asked to vote electronically by email.

Other Reports: None

Executive Session (if needed):

Chairman Garrett asked for a motion to enter executive session. Mayor Nathan Senn made a motion to go into executive session at 12:40 for an economic development matter and was seconded by Stan Bryson. The Board unanimously approved to enter executive session.

Chairman Garrett declared the board out of executive session at 12:47 with no action taken.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley