

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – March 17, 2026

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Matthew Brownlee, Jimmy Capps, Dabs Davis, Jim Donahoo, Dr. Hope Rivers, Mayor Nathan Senn, Steve West

Guests:

Jerre Threat, Laurens County

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange

Serina Combs – Burr & Forman

Press:

None

Vice Chairman Bell called the meeting to order at 12:12 and Justin Benfield gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials

Vice Chairman Bell asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. Matthew Brownlee made the motion to approve the agenda and Dr. Hope Rivers seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Vice Chairman Bell asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 11/18/25 meeting. Jimmy Capps made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Dabs Davis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for December 2025, January and February 2026. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

* The Spring Hire Summit event is Tuesday, April 28 at The Ridge. This initiative connects workforce ready high school seniors with actively hiring companies. This was a great event last year and is expected to be even stronger for this second year.

* The school districts are hosting STEAM on the Square again this year on Saturday, March 28. This is "a dynamic showcase of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics that brings student learning to life." It will be held in Laurens from 9:00 to 1:00.

* The Upper Savannah Regional Job Fair is planned for March 25 from 10:00 to 1:00 at the Piedmont Technical College O'Dell Center in Greenwood.

* Clinton High School hosted a career fair on campus January 29. It was for 10th – 12th graders. About 15 companies were present to demonstrate and share about careers in their organizations. LCWSC had an interesting display to demonstrate water purification.

* The LCDC annual onsite audit with Phillips CPAs and Advisors is planned for March 26

* The annual industry & investor golf tournament is planned for April 2 and will be held at Musgrove Mill Golf Club. The response has been strong, and it looks to be at 26 teams.

* The Laurens County unemployment rate that was last reported for December was 5.3% (compared to the state rate of 4.6%). www.dew.sc.gov

* There have been two new investors to LCDC since it was last reported to the board. They are Self Regional Healthcare at the top tier Partner Level and Stevenson Weir Southern to the Supporter Level. SWS acquired Carolina Concrete. There are currently 37 entities in these investor roles.

Marketing Update – Whitney Laqrangle

* Annual Meeting recap- We had around 77 in attendance for our annual meeting last month, held for the first time at Presbyterian College. Since we were presenting the exciting results of the economic impact study, we planned for more in attendance this year. We were honored to have Dr. Joey Von Nessen, Research Economist with the USC Division of Research, as our featured presenter. Dr. Von Nessen shared the results of an independent economic impact analysis measuring the long-term influence of LCDC's efforts. An email with links to both the full economic impact study as well as our annual report was sent in February. A printed copy of the annual report is also included at each seat today.

*SEO Marketing plan- At the November meeting Whitney mentioned a yearlong digital advertising initiative to strengthen the LCDC SEO reach and stay up with current and growing trends. LCDC signed with Vetrano Marketing in December and Brianna created targeted Google ads linked to keyword search words and phrases. This plan includes a real-time performance dashboard and quarterly reporting and meetings. Since our first quarterly catch-up isn't until next month, I reached out to Brianna for a few quick insights to report:

- Since the search ads launched on January 5th, the ads have attracted 231 non-local users during key phases in their site selection research. The searches driving the most clicks to the Laurens County website have been "industrial properties South Carolina", "doing business in South Carolina", "how to incorporate a business in South Carolina" and "development land South Carolina".
- In addition to the 231 website visits, the ads also led people to take important actions on the site, including:
 - 12 PDF downloads, primarily overview sheets for specific properties
 - Views of the Contact Us page, resulting in clicks on Laurens County team email addresses
 - Searches within the website
 - 27 users spending over 5 minutes on the site, indicating in-depth interest and engagement.

EDR- We will be attending the SC Power Team's Economic Review (EDR) this week, with a chance to network with many investors and other local developers from around the state.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

*As a last recap of 2025, there were five announcements totaling 250 new jobs and \$125.2 million in investment. As a comparison, so far in 2026 these are the announcements: Adeptus - \$93 million investment with 126 new jobs, Hydrite Chemical in Hunter Industrial Park - \$63 million investment with 13 new jobs, Coastal Precast Systems in Clinton – \$9 million investment and 70 new jobs, Shamrock Technologies which has announced a relocation of their headquarters to the Connexial Center along with \$39.6 million in investment and 57 new jobs. In April: Project Oracle will announce (they are going in the Connexial Center and are a tier one automotive supplier of \$120.8 million investment with 277 new jobs). Project Sunshine is locating into the 620,000 SF spec building in Hunter Industrial Park with a \$350 million investment and 564 new jobs. This will be the third largest announcement in the county. This totals \$675.4 million in investment and just over 1,100 new jobs so far in 2026.

*At the annual meeting held in February, Dr. Joey Von Neesen, economist with the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina spoke on the economic impact of LCDC on Laurens County over the past 20 years. Jonathan provided a short recap of some of the key statistics covered at the meeting. One of the main takeaways was that almost 26% of the jobs or employment in Laurens County can be attributed directly to the work of the Laurens County Development Corporation. There is also a 2.4 multiplier for jobs in the Upstate 10 county region. That means that for every job created in Laurens County there are another 14 jobs created elsewhere in the region. The average South Carolina employment multiplier is 1.7. A lot of that is attributed to the fact that Laurens County recruits a lot of manufacturing jobs and that carries a higher multiplier. With wage comparison: The average annual wage in Laurens County is \$51,561 and the direct jobs affiliated with LCDC recruitment averages \$83,493. Both direct and indirect jobs affiliated with LCDC averages \$71,906 which is 40% higher than the county average. The current economic impact of LCDC is approximately \$20.7 billion annually on the local economy. And a \$4.9 billion impact on the Upstate region.

*An update was also given about a private developer partnering with the current landowner of approximately 650 acres adjoining Hunter Industrial Park. Their plan is to build a new industrial park or basically an extension of Hunter Industrial Park housing over 5 million square feet of industrial space. It is in the very early stages of planning at this point.

SCDOC site Enhancement Grant – Jonathan Coleman:

*It has been covered several times that the State of South Carolina conducted a site enhancement award program totaling \$80 million in 2025 which was appropriated by the legislature for the entire state and LCDC applied for multiple projects. Laurens County was awarded just over \$9 million for two separate projects. Aiken County was the only other county to be awarded more. One of the purposes is to purchase 220 acres along I-385 near the Connexial Center. Some are already under contract. LCDC will be the owner of the property, but it is for the development of a new interchange at exit #19. This project will most likely be 4 to 5 years out, but this is the first step in the process. The other part of the grant will be used for upgrades to sewer capacity in that area.

Executive Session:

None

Other Business:

With no other business the meeting to adjourn at 12:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley