

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – March 19, 2024

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Tom Brooks, Jimmy Capps, Jim Donahoo, Rhett Harris, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Amanda Munyan, Dr. David O'Shields, Brown Patterson, Dr. Hope Rivers, Mayor Nathan Senn, David Tribble, Steve West, John Young

Guests:

None

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Vic McDonald (Clinton Chronicle)

Chairman West called the meeting to order at 12:11 and Justin Benfield gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials

Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. John Young made the motion to approve the agenda and Brown Patterson seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 11/21/23 meeting. Mayor Nathan Senn made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Tom Brooks seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for December 2023, January, and February 2024. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- On the heels of ZF Transmissions' monumental expansion announcement focusing on the EV market in November they followed it up with a Ribbon Cutting event for their new PowerLine transmission line on February 6. The PowerLine is new technology for an 8-speed transmission designed for commercial vehicles. They hosted an exciting event which included some of their top leadership from Germany and Michigan along with Governor McMaster. The event stage was set up on their manufacturing floor with tours and lunch for everyone following. By 2025 this new production line plans to deliver 200,000 transmissions per year.

-LCDC hosted a 1st quarter Industry meeting on February 22 at the CAM. The topic for this meeting was introducing the plans for a countywide career & technology center for high school students. There was a good discussion about employment needs and plans for the proposed center.

-Initial conversations have begun for hosting graduating high school student job fairs as in previous years. I don't think any dates have been set yet, but it's great to be able to partner again this year if everyone is interested.

-The annual Industry / Investor Golf Tournament is next week. The tournament is full with 25 teams committed and a wait list. This is always a great opportunity for networking for state and local community leaders with industry and investors.

-The onsite financial audit for the 2023 financials is scheduled and will be conducted in mid-April by Phillips CPA firm.

-Since the last board meeting in November, LCDC has lost one investor – BE&K Building Group out of Greenville. And gained three new investors. Those are Heritage Landscaping out of Gilbert; AME, Inc (a crane and industrial contractor in Fort Mill); and the SC Department of Agriculture.

-The Laurens County unemployment rate was last reported for January at 3.5% compared to the state rate of 3.0%. Laurens County ended 2023 at 3.4% and the state was flat.

Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange

-We had a great time at the PC women's and men's basketball game LCDC sponsored last month. Since we know not everyone could join us for a Saturday game, and wanted to be sure the Blue Hose were celebrated, we hosted a happy hour at The Lumberyard on the Tuesday before.

-In an effort not to count any chickens before they hatch, our 2023 Annual Reports were delayed in design and printing due to the two late announcements in December. Design was brought back in-house this year and they were printed locally. After a busy start to the year hosting our annual meeting and already receiving numerous RFIs, Whitney finished them in late February, adding a couple more weeks for printing. They were mailed out early last week, so you should have received yours. If not, I have a couple of extra copies here. Our printing run choices were only 250 or 500, and I chose not to waste paper, so I only had a few overages.

-What started with a plan to create a video or commercial, turned into something we feel will be more beneficial in the long run. Due to videos being so expensive and becoming outdated so quickly, we are now working with the Golden Shovel Agency on a marketing blueprint, which will outline a comprehensive strategy and analysis conducted by their marketing team. The process began with a community survey, followed by a SWOT analysis, identifying target audiences based on data and feedback, website review, recommendations, and ultimately, they will deliver their final marketing plan. This will include several articles written to boost SEO for a better web and search presence, as well as prompts and hashtags for social media interactions. I also plan to meet with my counterpart at York County to see how she has implemented a similar plan.

-Two weeks ago, Lynn and I attended the SC Department of Commerce's 2024 SC Rural Summit in North Augusta. We were proud to be so well represented, seeing Mayor Nathan in action during his session, "Beyond AnyTown, USA: A Vision for a Walkable, Picturesque Laurens". Main Street Laurens even got a mention during Jenny Boulware's session on the new We Shop SC program.

-Last week, we all attended the SC Power Team's 2024 Economic Development Review (EDR). Each year, the South Carolina Power Team hosts select stakeholders, partners, and allies in the economic development community based on ED impact and involvement. The invitation-only event provides updates on initiatives of the South Carolina Power Team, key topics in the industry, success stories from existing or new industry announcements, and education on community preparedness. It was a great chance to create new as well as build on existing relationships. Jim Donahoo with Laurens Electric and Dr. Hope Rivers with Piedmont Tech were also in attendance.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- To recap 2023, Laurens County saw a record year on capital investment with \$648.6 million and 503 new jobs announced. With that 2024 begins on the pace as 2023. At this point in 2023 the LCDC had received 18 RFIs and it is the same to date in 2024. And with those have come seven prospect visits to the county with two planned in the next week.

- In February Jonathan attended a two-day site consultant event in Dallas. This included about 30 different site selectors and included a lot of one-on-one time to interact. There continues to be a lot of interest in the Upstate region of SC and Southeast in general.

- Along with the previously mentioned events staff attended everyone also attended the first Governor's Summit on Economic Development in Columbia. The SC Department of Commerce rolled out their new branding strategy. Site selectors from across the country were also in attendance at the Summit and also a reception the evening before at the Governor's mansion.

Clinton 26 Commerce Park Road Project Grant Approval – Jonathan Coleman:

-The City of Clinton, the LCDC, the CEDC, and the SC Department of Commerce (SC DOC) have partnered to work on developing the former Whitten Center property. The CEDC bought this property from the state

and is approximately 250 acres. It adjoins the property owned by Pacolet Milliken at the Clinton 26 Commerce Park across Highway 72 which is about 750 acres. The SC DOC has provided a grant for \$350,000 and the CEDC will add \$1 million. The CEDC has requested and LCDC staff would like to propose the LCDC contribute \$250,000. All these funds are going to build a new road into property to allow access to develop. This would be a traditional industrial park road that would open up the rest of the property along I-26 and HWY 72. Tom Brooks added that the property was given to the City by the State. Clinton City Council is currently going through readings to give the property to the CEDC. The next plans will be to thin and clear timber to create an area for a pad. This coincides with the work already in progress to have the entire park that is almost 1,000 acre designated as a Palmetto Site. The CEDC will own the road. After a time of discussion, Chairman West called for a motion. Mayor Nathan Senn made a motion to approve the request of the LCDC contributing \$250,000 to the road project and Shawn Bell seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion with a show of hands.

Small Industry Grant Approval, MPF Products – Jonathan Coleman

-At the November board meeting the Board approved the new Small Industry Grant Program for \$25,000 for a qualifying project. Staff has received one application since then and it is a perfect fit for this grant opportunity. MPF Products in Gray Court had an announcement fall 2023. They have a \$1.5 million expansion on their building and will be creating a minimum of three new jobs. They currently employ about 60 in Gray Court. The Executive Committee has approved this grant and moved it on to full board approval. Coming from committee no motion is need and Chairman West called for a vote. The Board unanimously approved the recommendation with a show of hands.

Northside Site ROW Approval – Jonathan Coleman

-As many have seen traveling along HWY 221 to I-385, Laurens CPW is building a new substation in Hunter Industrial Park. With that, they need to run a line from the transmission line to the substation. Late last year the county transferred what is called the Northside Industrial Site to the LCDC. The LCPW has made a request to the LCDC for right of way (ROW) to go along the border of the site to tie into the substation. Engineers have reviewed the proposed ROW and it does not impact the developability of the site. There is a resolution that was included in the board package. Staff is requesting board approval to grant the LCPW A 75-foot ROW along the boundary of the Northside Industrial Site to assist them in energizing the new substation. John Young added that the ROW is actually for the Piedmont Municipal Power Agency which is the power supplier serving the LCPW power substation. When completed this project will be close to a \$6 million investment. It was added that this new substation will be key to the future of Hunter Industrial Park. Dr. David O’Shields made a motion to approve the request of the LCDC providing right of way at the Northside Industrial Site and Tom Brooks seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion with a show of hands.

Executive Session:

None

Other Business:

Mr. Coleman asked Dr. O’Shields and Mr. Harris to provide and update on the plans for a countywide career and technology center for high school students. They reported that the committee has met with civil engineers and reviewed possible placement of the proposed facility on two different county owned properties. Funding is still within the legislative delegation control of if Laurens County will get the funds needed to build the center. The committee has made an informal choice of the preferred site and sent by letter to Representative Doug Gilliam.

With no other business the meeting to adjourn at 12:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley