

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – May 16, 2023

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Tom Brooks, Jimmy Capps, Jim Donahoo, Jeff Field, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Amanda Munyan, Brown Patterson, Dr. David Pitts, Dr. Ameca Thomas, David Tribble, Steve West

Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator), Charles Dixon (PTC)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Brenda Stewart (Laurens County BUZZ)

Chairman West called the meeting to order at 12:07

Minutes and Financials

Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. Dr. Thomas 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 03/31/23 meeting. Jim Donahoo 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 March and April 2023. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- A sample of Europastry Brioche Bread was included in lunch to showcase one of the newest industries in the county. We are excited that they are now making product.
- Everyone is aware that the Annual Industry and Investor Golf Tournament was held on March 31. It was a successful day hosting and networking with individuals from across the state. Twenty-three teams participated.
- Two high school career exploration / job fairs were held in April, and both went very well with about 20 companies participating at each event. Board support was greatly appreciated.
- The closure planned at Renfro in June has been covered several times. The last update available was from their corporate office last week. They shared that the planned exit date is June 30th, and they have workforce reductions happening now. Along with SC Works we have offered additional support to the remaining employees if needed.
- Another update is on the closure of DSV Logistics in Laurens. They had a social media post in mid-April stating that after 31 years they shipped their last Michelin tire from the facility. The same gentleman that brought in the first tires loaded the last one shipping out. They also shared that 95% of the remaining staff is transitioning to the new location in Spartanburg. All the ones not moving have shared with the HR team that they have plans in place.
- Sunny Days Entertainment will be having a grand opening event next week at their new facility on N. Old Laurens Rd.
- In late April LCDC had external auditors onsite examining the financial records. They plan to present at the July board meeting.

- The Laurens County unemployment rate reported for March is 3.5% compared to the state rate of 3.2%.

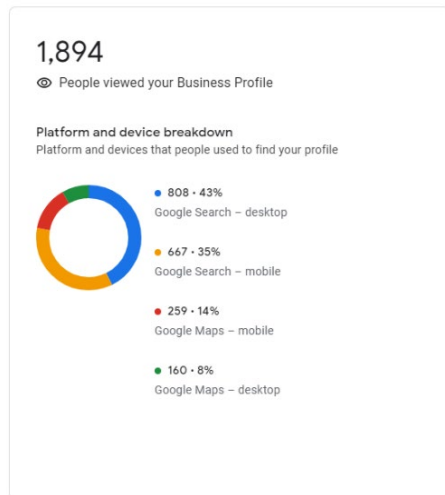
Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange

-Ms. Lagrange reported that she has mainly been working on the large number of RFIs being received and that many great things are happening with the county and being noticed.

- The visitor's guide story map has been live and published on the LCDC website under the "About Us" menu item called "Visit Laurens County" for a couple of months now. Board members are invited to visit the site and provide feedback on any changes in business listings, closures, new businesses to add, etc.

-Ms. Lagrange plans to fly the LCDC drone in the next week or two to get some updated shots/footage of properties. If there are any specific areas board members would like to be included, send a request.

-LCDC analytics for the website as well as the Google Business profile are looking good. Just as with social media, photos and content will be added to the Google Business profile to keep the LCDC showing up when searching for Laurens County. The site currently has a rise in website traffic, up 22% from the previous month, which seems to be a steady trend.



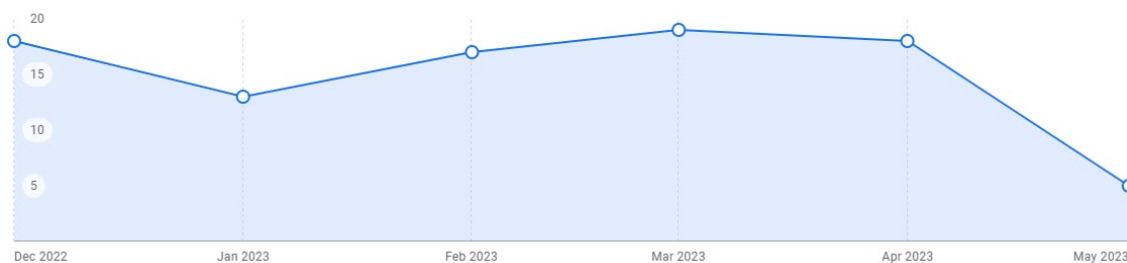
345

Business Profile interactions ⓘ



90

Website clicks made from your Business Profile



Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- RFI update: Have received 31 RFIs to date compared to 35 at this same time in 2022. Since the last board meeting the LCDC has hosted 6 different prospect visits to the county ranging from an hour to two days. There is a lot of activity and interest right now.

- The Upstate Alliance had a site consultant event two weeks ago. One of the featured programs held for the consultants was the partnership between ZF Transmissions and Piedmont Technical College. They had Michael Morris (HR Director at ZF) and Matt Wiggins (Dean of Workforce Innovation with Piedmont Tech) provide a presentation on the partnership and success in developing a manufacturing workforce.

- Secretary of Commerce Lightsey and the leadership at Commerce attended a meeting at ZF in late April.

- The SC Economic Developer's Association annual conference was last week, which Jonathan attended.

- The LCDC does not take political stands on issues, but Mr. Coleman wanted to share about a current bill proposal at the SC State House. There is advocacy from the Upstate Alliance, the SC State Chamber of Commerce, and the SC Manufacturing Alliance against this bill and he wanted to bring it to everyone's attention. It does have the possibility to impact Laurens County. It is referred to as the Foreign Adversary Bill. It passed the SC Senate by a wide margin and is currently with the House and might come back up next session. Basically, it prohibits ownership of property in SC of any company with any financial interest from China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, and North Korea. Mr. Coleman pointed out that Volvo is owned by a Chinese investment firm. The second largest manufacturing employer in Laurens County is a 50% joint venture with a Chinese investment firm. There is a lot of Foreign Direct Investment in the Upstate and in SC and it will be an issue with financial backing. Again, the LCDC is not advocating for any investment from these countries, just sharing facts of how this could impact industry in Laurens County and the state of SC. Chairman West added the background from where the proposed bill initiated. There was a Chinese entity looking to purchase a very large tract of property near Savannah Lakes in McCormick County. The residents there protested the purchase and the Senator from that area was the leading sponsor of the bill as a result – Senator Shane Massey. It did not originate as a manufacturing issue but is all encompassing.

Product Development – Jonathan Coleman

-The LCDC along with the SC Power Team is currently working on the process of the Connexial Center going through their site readiness program for the second time. It is a deep dive on the park conducted before additional grant funds are invested into the infrastructure. This step will finish the road and extend the water and sewer lines so that it will be a full loop in the park.

-Power South and Clinton 26 Commerce Park are both still moving through the Palmetto Sites Program with the state. This is the new name for the existing certified site program.

-The Woodfield spec building is completed. It is 320,000 SF and is generating a lot of interest. The developers recently held a grand opening event. The other spec building of 650,000 SF that has been discussed in Hunter Industrial Park should be moving forward by mid-summer with grading.

Executive Session:

None

With no other business Chairman West adjourned the meeting 12:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley