

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – May 21, 2024

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Jim Donahoo, Brown Patterson, Dr. Hope Rivers, Dr. Joey Penland, Dr. Brenda Schrantz, David Tribble, Steve West

Guests:

None

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

None

Chairman West called the meeting to order at 12:14.

Quorum was not present. Reports were provided but no business was conducted.

Minutes and Financials

No vote taken for approval of March minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for March and April 2024. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

* The MPF Products expansion construction is almost complete, and the company is considering a ribbon cutting later this year. The leadership again expressed their appreciation for the grant provided from the LCDC.

*The Piedmont Tech team hosted a Business & Industry engagement forum at the CAM in mid-April and the LCDC team appreciates them reaching out to local industry and companies to hear their needs firsthand. There was a lot of good discussion and ideas shared.

*Outside auditors visited in April to conduct the annual onsite review. A report has not been received but they are scheduled to attend the July board meeting to review their work.

*The LCDC annual Industry & Investor Golf Tournament went very well in March. It was a full field of 25 teams (100 players). Everyone's support for this networking event is appreciated.

*Another update concerning Musgrove Mill is about the State Historic Site also on Hwy 56. Lynn has been contacted again by Lou Fontana from the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism about improvements at Musgrove Mill State Historic Site. This is a little outside the traditional LCDC scope, but think it is still important for the community to share. Plans were passed along to the Board last year where the SCPRT are seeking funding support to make technology and interpretation improvements at Musgrove Mill for the upcoming 250th celebration. The planned opening date is May 2026. It appears like some funds have already been committed locally and they are looking to close the gap. This updated information about the project will be emailed to the Board for review.

*There have been no changes to the LCDC outside investor list since the last board.

*The Laurens County unemployment rate was last reported for March at 3.4% compared to the state rate of 3.1%.

Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange

* It was mentioned at the March board meeting that LCDC staff has been working with the Golden Shovel Agency on a marketing blueprint, to outline a comprehensive strategy based on analysis conducted by their team. Five articles were finalized and delivered last Friday, and we received the next five for review yesterday. More posts and web entries stemming from these articles will be rolled out over the next few months to boost SEO and our web presence. Please like and share over the various social media platforms.

* Whitney has been working on updating the Higher Opportunity website, adding newest industries, more resources, and adding and checking links for each industry's job search listing.

* A video was shown to the Board as a product update that ties into marketing which Whitney created for the new Hunter Industrial spec building. Last week, Whitney flew the drone over the almost-completed 621,000 square foot building and posted it across the LCDC socials. It was picked up and a write-up covered on the Laurens County BUZZ last Thursday. (Shows video of drone footage)

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

* Mr. Coleman began by sharing the overall activity received in RFIs. The number of requests being received has drastically dropped off in the past month. Chairman West concurred that information from his point of view with Duke Energy. To date this year, 25 RFIs have been received compared to 35 at this same point in 2023. The difference is that only two have been received in May of 2024 where there were about 12 in May 2023. Mr. Coleman went on to say that he didn't know why presidential election years are slower, but it is evident again this year. But on the flipside of that, the LCDC has had seven different prospect meetings either in person or virtually since the last board meeting.

* The Upstate SC Alliance hosted an Austrian manufacturing delegation for a luncheon several weeks ago and Jonathan attended. This delegation was comprised of companies already located in the US or are interested in locating in the Southeast. A lot were automotive related.

* Jonathan and Lynn attended a daylong workshop at the SCDOC focused on exiting industry and building relationships.

* In 2022, Project Dogwood was announced locating in the spec building on Hwy 72. Construction work continues on the original building of 60,000 SF expanding it to over 200,000 SF when complete. The job numbers are in the 200 range. The company is working through confidentiality steps and plan a full announcement late June into July. They do plan to have some type of welcome event soon after that and those plans will be shared with the board at the appropriate time.

North Old Laurens Road Property Resolution – Jonathan Coleman

-Jonathan reviewed the information pertaining to the resolution but no vote was taken.

Executive Session:

None

Other Business:

None

With no other reports the meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley