

## ***Laurens County Development Corporation***

### **Board Meeting – Minutes**

Tuesday – July 18, 2023

#### Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Tom Brooks, Jim Donahoo, Jeff Field, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Amanda Munyan, Brown Patterson, Dr. Hope Rivers, Mayor Nathan Senn, David Tribble, Steve West

#### Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator), Rusty Denning (PTC)

#### Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

#### Press:

John Clayton (Laurens Advertiser)

Chairman West called the meeting to order at 12:14 and Mayor Senn gave the invocation.

#### Minutes and Financials

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

Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 05/16/23 meeting. Mayor Senn made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Jim Donahoo seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for May and June 2023. The financials were accepted as information only.

#### 2022 Annual Audit Presentation – Matt Phillips, Phillips CPA's and Advisors

-Matt Phillips provided a detailed review of the 2022 audit results and answered questions from the board. He reported that Phillips CPA's and Advisors provided a "clean and unmodified" opinion of the LCDC financial position as of December 31, 2022, with no material weaknesses and no items of note to report. He stated this is the best opinion the LCDC can receive. Mr. Phillips added that they did implement the new lease standard in this audit and explained that process. This standard requires companies to book operating leases within the financial statements.

#### Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- The LCDC is partnering with several agencies to assist the local SC Works office with a Laurens County job fair. It is July 19 from 1:00 to 4:00 at the CAM.

- Lynn recently met with the Director of Corporate Affairs with the SC State Park Service about the 250<sup>th</sup> Revolution initiative. He was asking for support in contacting some of our industry partners and maybe some of you as our board members. They are looking for financial support in revamping and improving some of the interactive experiences at the Musgrove Mill Visitor Center. His name is Lou Fontana if you happen to get a call or email.

- For workforce – The Laurens and Newberry Counties Middle School Career Showcase planning team has a meeting schedule for later this month. The date is set on the school calendars for Wednesday, November 8 and it will be in Laurens this year at the CAM. This initiative is really growing into a powerful tool in supporting our middle schoolers in their career exposure and exploration. Invitation emails will be sent soon soliciting company support and participation.

- The Laurens County unemployment rate was last reported for May at 3.0% compared to the state rate of 3.1%.
- Dr. Rivers was invited to share about a Piedmont Tech initiative partnering with Presbyterian College hosting a group of 15 Italian exchange students this summer. They are involved in training and vocational experience through higher education in programs such as machine tool and mechatronics. They are currently training with Alupress, Brawo, Flame Spray, and West Fraser companies in Laurens County. The visit will be for three weeks.

#### Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange

- The LCDC will host a Stew n' Brew event this fall for industry, investors, and supporters, hopefully out at Musgrove Mill again. Details are being discussed on availability and event space on their end.
- The LCDC continues to partner with PC Athletics again this year. We are working to plan a couple of networking/social events to coincide with games and activities. Stay tuned for "save the date" notifications in the next month or two. PSAs will be broadcasted at games regarding our sponsorship and the mission of LCDC for community awareness.
- Website and Facebook reporting:
  - o Since last board meeting, we've had 4.4K web views by 1.6K users
    - Top 3 pages in order of popularity are the home page, Visit Laurens County page, and the Properties Search page
  - o We have 1.9K likes on our FB page and 627 on Instagram
    - Since last board meeting, we've reached over 7K people on FB and Instagram reach has increased by 12.1%
    - In comparing our FB reach to other ED organizations, we are ahead or toe-to-toe with larger areas: Greenville Area DC has 1.5K, Richland Co has less than 500, and the regional alliance, Upstate SC Alliance only has 200 more followers than we do.
- There are still plans to create a video highlighting the County for marketing purposes. The video will likely focus on quality of life but also the business climate. Due to videos becoming outdated or obsolete so quickly as surroundings and circumstances change, we really want to take the time to drill down on what we want our vision to be and ensure we capture content that will stand the test of time--or at least a couple of years.

#### Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- RFI update: Have 49 to date compared to 49 at the same point in 2022. For additional information, there is a handout included in the board packets detailing the breakdown of the received RFIs this year. It is divided by the property submitted. Some RFIs have multiple properties submitted at the same time if there is a fit.
- The Hunter Industrial Park spec building planning is progressing. The developer has closed on financing and grading should begin soon. It will be 650,000 SF.
- The Woodfield spec building in Woodfield Park is complete. It is 320,000 SF.
- The Renfro building in Clinton is just over 500,000 SF. It was bought by a developer group which is spending some money on it for low cost but high impact improvements.
- Since the last board meeting Sunny Days had a grand opening at their new facility in Gray Court.
- The Upstate Alliance hosted a delegation a few weeks ago from Austria. The US Ambassador for Austria was there and signed an agreement / MOU where Austria and the Upstate region will partner on trade and working with companies.

#### Product Development – Jonathan Coleman

- The Palmetto Sites certification program has been mentioned before. The LCDC is putting the Clinton 26 Commerce Park and Powers South through this state program for recommendations of needed improvements. Everything has been submitted to be able to qualify for grant funding to assist with due diligence improvements.

Executive Session:

Chairman West asked for a motion to enter executive session. Jeff Field made a motion to go into executive session at 12:51 for an economic development matter and a contractual matter and was seconded by Brown Patterson. The Board unanimously approved entering executive session.

Chairman West declared the board out of executive session at 1:04 and no action was taken during session.

Brown Patterson then made the motion to authorize LCDC to contribute \$1 million in support to Project Zebra for site and infrastructure upgrades, pending LCDC Board approval of the final agreement. The grant will be paid from the Octagon Reinvestment Fund. Jeff Field seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion by a show of hands. Project Zebra will invest \$620 million and create 400 new jobs.

With no other business Chairman West adjourned the meeting 1:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn S. Finley