Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Attendees:
Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Dabs Davis, Charles Dixon, Jim Donahoo, Jeff Field, Brown Patterson, Jerre Threat, Steve West

Guests:
Beth Land, Land Strategies & Danielle Besser, Upstate SC Alliance

Staff:
Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange

Press:
None

Chairman Patterson called the meeting to order at 12:25 and gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials
Chairman Patterson asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda after amending to include the formal approval of a resolution pertaining to the SC DOC grant to purchase land in the Gray Court area. Dabs Davis made the motion to approve the amended agenda and Justin Benfield seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the amended agenda.

Chairman Patterson asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 07/20/26 meeting. Steve West 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 July and August 2026. The financials were accepted as information only.

Land Purchase Resolution – Brandon Norris, Burr & Forman Law Firm
LCDC attorney, Brandon Norris, explained the resolution to the board which is needed for titling purposes. Mr. Coleman reviewed the project plan that has been covered at previous meetings and shared that two of the three parcels have been closed on or are in the processes. The third parcel is in ongoing negotiations. Shawn Bell made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Justin Benfield seconded the motion. Chairman Patterson called for a vote and it was unanimously approved.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley
* It is time to begin collecting wage data from the Laurens County manufacturing sector. The annual survey has been sent out to the distribution list and the survey link will be open until the end of September. After the data is compiled, it will also be shared with the Board.
* Lynn was honored to be invited to attend the 2026 SC DEW Workforce Champion Award event on September 1 that was held at the Governor's Mansion. The award recipient was from Aiken this year – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.
* There is a new industry added to the directory lists that LCDC supports in the County. JRS Wood Works opened in 2023 and is a small operation in Clinton. They currently have 3 employees and are looking to build their client base and grow. They make custom wood pallets, skids and shipping crates for the manufacturing industry.
* The planning team has met for this year's Laurens County / Newberry County 8th Grade Career Showcase. Whitney and Lynn both provide support to the initiative which will be held on November 5 in Laurens at the

LCAM. We are looking for volunteer companies again to set up tables for demonstrations so please let us know if you are interested.
* Lynn will be going to Columbia for the SC DOC Existing Industry Fall Partner Forum on September 16. It will be a good day of networking with other exiting industry colleagues and supporting partners from across the state.
* The Laurens County unemployment rate that was last reported for July was 4.1% (compared to the state rate of 4.2%). The current SC labor participation rate is 58.8% which is slightly down from the last report. (www.dew.sc.gov)

Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange
* Planning is underway for the Laurens & Newberry Counties Career Showcase. Whitney is managing the website for the event, so that will continue to be updated as company registrations come in. The site will give each company that participates their own information page, with fun facts and career clusters listed. If anyone is interested in participating or seeing photos from previous years, the site is www.lcncshowcase.com.
* A couple of insights from our SEO marketing initiative performance dashboard since our last meeting are:
    - An 88% increase in visits to the "Contact Us" page.
    - PDF downloads increased by 18%, with the two top downloads being the Industrial Directory and the Investor Directory
    - International users in Brazil, Germany, Netherlands, India and China have had strong key event rates. (Key events are important actions that a user takes on the website–such as clicking an email address or downloading a flyer)
* The annual Stew & Brew will be held on Thursday, October 8th from 4–6 p.m., again at The Lumberyard in Clinton. This is an informal networking event that features Lowcountry boil and beverages and is open to board members, investors, industry representatives, county leaders, and community supporters. A second email went out, and all Board members are encouraged to invite respective board and council members.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman
* The current number of RFIs received is 47 year-to-date compared to 55 at this point in 2025. It is interesting to note that there were zero RFIs received in August and so far only two in September. There are two projects currently considering Laurens County and one is rather large. It originates from the fall of 2025 illustrating that site location can be a lengthy process.
* Jonathan attended a Consultant Connect Conference recently that included 16 site consultants and attendees from across the country. The message was similar but there was also a similar message that they are seeing across the country that economic development has increasingly become a target over the last 24 months.

Nominating Committee Appointment – Brown Patterson:
* Chairman Patterson stated that a nominating committee needed to be established to present officers to the board at the November meeting. He asked that the committee be comprised of Justin Benfield, Dabs Davis and Steve West. All accepted the appointment.

Land Wise Initiative – Beth Land, Land Strategies & Danielle Besser, Upstate SC Alliance:
* Danielle Besser and Beth Land introduced the new initiative of the Upstate Alliance and partnership with Beth Land of Land Strategies called LandWise. They shared that Upstate South Carolina's economic development community recognized the importance of providing foundational knowledge of the process, players, planning and incentives that affect our region's ability to attract and retain business. The Upstate Alliance partnered with its local economic developers and Land Strategies to create this educational video series for community leaders. These videos serve to build greater public awareness for why communities engage in economic development. This educational platform can give a community's stakeholders a resource they can turn to as they navigate economic development decisions. The platform covers topics such as: Why Economic Development Matters, Understanding the Local Property Tax Base in SC, and Why Communities Compete. It also provides a deeper level of information into the core fundamentals such as

Site Selection 101 & 102, Why Site Readiness Matters, Intro to Fee-In-Lieu of Tax (FILOT) in SC, The Vision & Role of Elected Officials, The Cost of Doing Nothing, and The Benefits to Quality of Life. Three videos have been produced by the Upstate Alliance so that all audiences can learn more about economic development. As the initiative continues to be developed, the Upstate Alliance will work with their local developer partners on best practices and engagement with their communities.

Executive Session:
None

Other Business:
None

With no other business the meeting to adjourn at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley