

# ***Laurens County Development Corporation***

## **Board Meeting – Minutes**

Tuesday – September 16, 2025

### Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Matthew Brownlee, Jimmy Capps, Dabs Davis, Jim Donahoo, Jeff Field, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Dr. Jody Penland, Mayor Nathan Senn

### Guests:

Melissa Ferqueron – Laurens County

### Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange

### Press:

None

Vice Chairman Bell called the meeting to order at 12:14 and Justin Benfield gave the invocation.

### Minutes and Financials

Vice Chairman Bell made a motion to approve the meeting's agenda and Jimmy Capps seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Vice Chairman Bell asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 07/15/25 meeting. Dr. Jody Penland made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Matthew Brownlee seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for July and August 2025. The financials were accepted as information only.

### Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

\* The Annual 8<sup>th</sup> grade Career Showcase planning has kicked off and invitations have been sent to Laurens County Industries asking for their participation. The date is Thursday, November 6 at the Piedmont Tech Newberry campus.

\* Laurens High School is planning a career fair on campus on Wednesday, November 5 and they are currently taking registrations to participate.

\* The annual industry wage survey link is out. That data will be collected and reported in October.

\* Budget season is here and work has started on that for 2026.

\* The Laurens County unemployment rate last reported for July was at 5.0% (May 4.2% / June 4.8%) compared to the state rate of 4.2%. The current SC labor participation rate is 57.7% ([www.dew.sc.gov](http://www.dew.sc.gov))

\* LCDC has three new investors since last reported taking the total to 36. They are:

Messer Construction from Greenville at the Supporter Level

Landmark Builders from Columbia at the Supporter Level

ARCO Design/Build from Greenville at the Partner Level

### Marketing Update – Whitney Lagrange

\* As mentioned, the Laurens & Newberry Counties Career Showcase for 8th graders is on November 6th that LCDC is helping to plan. Whitney is managing the website for the event, so that will continue to be updated as information comes in for schools, as well as each company that registers. The site will give each company that participates their own information page, with fun facts and career clusters listed. If anyone is interested in learning more about the event, as well as who is participating, and seeing photos from previous years, the site is [www.lcncshowcase.com](http://www.lcncshowcase.com).

\* This week we will share the second industry spotlight from our photo series, featuring MPF Products. Three industries welcomed us for photo shoots, though the approval process for image use has taken longer than expected. We continue to follow up with the third industry for final clearance and will also reconnect with several additional industries we initially approached.

\* Whitney continues to build the aerial image library and drone footage for all available sites and parks. These will be used on social media while also updating listings on Commerce's LocateSC site.

\* Jonathan spoke at the Laurens County session of the SCEDA institute in August. They asked him to speak on the keys to success in economic development here in Laurens County.

\* The annual Stew & Brew will be held on Thursday, October 30th from 4–6 p.m., again at The Lumberyard in Clinton. This informal networking event will feature a Lowcountry boil and beverages and is open to board members, investors, industry representatives, county leaders, and community supporters. A "save the date" went out a couple of weeks ago and has already generated 33 confirmed guests, and a formal invitation will follow in the next two weeks. Board members are encouraged to invite your respective board and council members as well.

\* LCDC plans to host another holiday networking event in early December. Details are being discussed this week and a Save the Date will be sent out later in October to ensure it gets added to everyone's calendars ahead of the busy season.

#### Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

\* Since the last board meeting there have been 13 prospect visits. A couple were on their second visit but that is a very high number in a two-month timeframe. There have been 52 RFIs so far this year where at this point in 2024 it was 45. Even with the higher prospect visit activity, decision making seems slower than usual.

\*ZF Transmissions recently broke ground on their addition that was part of their expansion announcement in 2023. They are adding on to the front portion of the facility. Project Soro just had second reading at county council. They will announce at their third reading which is expected in November. This is an existing industry expansion in the Fountain Inn area that is \$9.25 million in investment and 43 new jobs.

\*For a product development update, the Palmetto Sites Certification on Powers South has completed and work on Clinton 26 is still progressing. The only outstanding item remaining there is a piece of title work and then it will also be complete. The SC Department of Commerce is beginning a new round this fall, and staff will submit for new site certifications on Hunter Industrial Park and the Connexial Center. In conjunction with the Palmetto Sites Certification staff will also be submitting for identified site enhancement grants. The state legislature allocated \$80 million to the site enhancement fund this year which has typically been \$5 million in the past. The total request for six different projects in Laurens County is \$38.4 million. Three at Powers South which includes clearing, road construction, and sewer upgrades. Property acquisition around Hunter Industrial Park and the Connexial Center along with sewer upgrades at the Connexial Center. Grant awards are at the discretion of the SCDOC and will be evaluated through an intensive review process.

#### Economic Impact Study – Jonathan Coleman

\* Data has been compiled and submitted to the team at USC. The process will take several months and the hope is to have results by the LCDC annual meeting with Dr. Joey Von Nessen, a research economist at the Darla Moore School of Business, as the speaker to present their findings.

#### Executive Session:

None

#### Other Business:

None

With no other business the meeting to adjourn at 12:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn S. Finley