

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – November 15, 2022

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Justin Benfield, Jimmy Capps, Jim Donahoo, Amanda Munyan, Brown Patterson, Dr. David Pitts, Dr. Hope Rivers, Mayor Nathan Senn, Dr. Ameca Thomas, David Tribble, Steve West

Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator), John Lummus (Upstate SC Alliance)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Whitney Lagrange

Press:

None

Vice Chairman West called the meeting to order at 12:10 and Mayor Senn gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials

Vice Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. Shawn Bell made the motion to approve the agenda and Jim Donahoo seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Vice Chairman West asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 09/20/22 meeting. Justin Benfield made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Brown Patterson seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Jonathan Coleman provided a recap of expenses for September and October 2022. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Jonathan Coleman

- Career Showcase – Approximately 1,000 8th grade students from Laurens and Newberry Counties visited with 25 different companies at PTC Newberry campus on November 1. The objective is for students to be exposed and explore possible career opportunities and the education / skill needed to attain. There was a great assortment of companies representing the 16 career clusters.

-Laurens Direct update – This is the SC DEW program that Thomas Higgs covered at the September board meeting. It is a partnership with SC DEW on a pilot discovery program just in Laurens County. SC Works is taking the lead on outreach and these are the updates provided in late October.

1200 individuals have been called with at least 2 attempts

Connected with 300

70 participated in survey

Laurens YMCA is offering a free family one month membership to anyone willing to take survey

Next part of the initiative will be a post card mailing handled by SC Works

#1 reason for not going back to work

Health (Self or caring for family member) If self, not able work long hours (10/12 hour shifts) any longer – less stamina.

#2 reason for not going back to work

Not earning enough money

- Possible 4th Q job fair – Lynn is surveying companies to judge interest or need of a job fair before year end in partnership with SC Works.
- An Industry Meeting with Piedmont Tech to discuss the curriculum offered and if any updates are needed to make it fit with expected needs in the future was held on October 11. It was well attended by industry HR leaders and most expressed interest in continuing to support the initiatives with students, especially through the high school's work-based learning coordinators.
- Upstate Alliance fall inbound site consultant event October - Lynn participated in an afternoon interacting and promoting Laurens County with 6 site consultants from across the US visiting the Upstate. This is an annual event hosted by the Upstate Alliance.
- 2022 Industrial Wage survey is out. Still working to get more participation. Will also share results with LCDC Board.
- September unemployment rates: Laurens County dropped slightly to 3.1% and the State is at 3.2%.

Marketing Activity – Whitney Lagrange

- iMAGINE Lakelands STEAM Festival- The 3rd iMAGINE Lakelands STEAM Festival took place on October 22nd in Greenwood with another large turnout. Whitney served on the planning committee once again this year and was there to set up and help run the event. ZF Transmissions Gray Court participated from Laurens County. This will probably be Whitney's last year serving on the committee for the event.
- Annual Report- Whitney is currently working on compiling the information and writing content for the annual report.
- Visit Laurens County- Story Map site -The visitor's guide story map site is now live and published on the LCDC website under the "About Us" menu item called "Visit Laurens County". Thomas Higgs reached out about also hosting it on the County's site as they redesign it as well. Please let Whitney know if you are interested in receiving a link to the site. It will need to be continually updated, but it is a good starting point/resource for anyone needing local visitor information on Laurens County.
- Holiday Drop-in- As a reminder, the LCDC will be hosting our holiday open house and drop-in on Tuesday, December 6th. There are already around 30 on the guest list and expect many more as the date draws nearer.
- HigherOpportunity.com- The redesign is complete and www.higheropportunity.com is now live with a new look and more resources.

Other Reports:

John Lummus with the Upstate SC Alliance provided an update for the region. He mentioned that activity continues to be strong for the entire year. In all of 2021 his team sent out 43 RFIs to the locals and through October 2022 they have reached 63. Announcement numbers are also higher in 2022 than 2021 with 2021 being the most successful year since 2014. The recent inbound site consultant event was successful and was the seconded hosted this year. They are finding that 25% to 50% of projects are coming from site consultants and feel it's important to build these relationships so that the Upstate of SC will be first of mind. Mr. Lummus sees that Laurens County continues to be a great place for companies to look for several reasons. There is a great skilled workforce, there are multiple great sites available, and the aggressive development of the economic development program of buildings and sites.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- For RFIs, the LCDC has had 73 RFIs to date. At this point in 2021 it was 58 with 68 total on the year. Activity continues to be tremendous compared to years past.
- Motor City Racks was announced last week. This is a \$26 million investment with 88 new jobs. This company will be going into the former BF Shaw building which is a good fill because it is a very specialized asset. County Council had the first reading on Project Tempo which is an existing industry expansion in the Fountain Inn area. It is a \$49.6 million investment with 58 new jobs. These 58 new jobs average about \$23 per hour. With that announcement it will take the annual total of announced new jobs to 521 and \$173 million in new capital investment for this year. One thing to note is that three new companies have been

recruited this year to fill existing buildings formerly filled by other companies. Two of these buildings were older and in need of work. This doesn't include the new company that has purchased the Clinton spec building which hasn't been announced yet.

-The annual meeting date has been set and will be on Tuesday, January 17, 2023. Invitations will be sent out soon and it will be held at Musgrove Mill in Clinton as in the past.

Strategic Plan Update – Staff

-No new updates to provide. Mr. Coleman shared that efforts will continue to develop a county-wide career and technology center model that would involve both school districts. The plan is developed now the efforts are on funding this very much needed educational center for the county's students.

2023 Budget Approval – Shawn Bell, Treasurer

Shawn Bell directed the board to the proposed 2023 budget included in the informational packets and which was emailed earlier. He covered the expected revenue and specific expense items where increases are shown. Mr. Coleman pointed out that the largest increase was in the Marketing/Advertising line. This is specifically in support of the athletic sponsorship with Presbyterian College and the need to create a commercial that will have airtime on ESPN. The vision now is that it will be a Laurens County quality of life commercial. After a time for questions and discussion, Vice Chairman West stated that coming from committee no motion is needed and called for a vote. The 2023 proposed budget was unanimously approved as presented.

2023 – 2024 Officer Nominating Committee Report – Justin Benfield

- a. Steve West – Chairman
- b. Brown Patterson – Vice Chairman
- c. Shawn Bell – Secretary
- d. Jeff Field – Treasurer
- e. John Young – Immediate Past Chairman

-Justin Benfield chaired the nominating committee and reported that on October 19, the committee, consisting of himself, Amanda Munyan and Jimmy Capps met and approved the slate of officers listed in this item of the agenda for the 2023 - 2024 term. Coming from committee no motion is needed and Vice Chairman West opened the meeting for a time of discussion and then called for a vote. The 2023 to 2024 proposed slate of officers was unanimously approved as presented.

Executive Session:

None

With no other business, a motion was made for the meeting to adjourn at 12:41 p.m. by Mayor Nathan Senn and seconded by Justin Benfield.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley