

# ***Laurens County Development Corporation***

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – March 15, 2022

## Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Dan Blakely, Amanda Munyan, Brown Patterson, Dr. Hope Rivers, Dr. Ameca Thomas, David Tribble, Steve West, John Young

## Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator)

## Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Sandy Cruickshanks

## Press:

Emil Finley (WLBG)

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 12:08 and gave the invocation.

## *Minutes and Financials*

Chairman Young stated that due to not having a quorum the meeting would proceed but to provide information only.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for December 2021, January, and February 2022. The financials were accepted as information only.

## *Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley*

-At the November meeting it was reported that the annual wage survey was almost complete. That was sent to all board members along with Laurens County industries in late November. There was approximately a 35% response rate and of the companies that responded, the average overall facility wage was \$21.64. For comparison, the average county wage assigned to Laurens County by the state for job development credits for 2022 is \$19.05.

-A job fair was held on November 18 at the PTC CAM which included a designated time for impacted Muffin Mam employees if they were interested. Overall, there were 34 employers registered for the event and SC Works tracked a total of 191 job seekers in attendance.

-The unemployment rate data was released for January. Laurens County is currently at 4.0% and the state is at 3.6%. For comparison, Laurens County was at 5.8% in January of 2021.

-It was announced several years ago that the Michelin tire distribution facility in Laurens would be relocating to another community in SC. In January, DSV Solutions, who operates this facility, announced their closure with the first layoff in early March and final closure projected in late summer or early fall. We have been assisting them and their employees since the announcement. This closure possibly impacts all employees working at the Laurens facility. Some may have the opportunity to transition to the new facility in Spartanburg if they choose to do so. The SC DEW and SC Works teams provided onsite unemployment resources and resume assistance followed by 3 days of onsite job fairs we hosted in late February. We were very pleased with the hiring employer interest. We had 15 different companies attend over the 3 days. Malouf Companies is the new company that is already operating on a small scale at this site. They are doing well and have been staffing up for their upcoming growth. They are currently at about 60 employees.

-Early planning is underway for a county wide job fair the first week in May. The date was set to accommodate both High Schools and they have already been invited to bring their graduating seniors to participate.

-There is a directory posted on the LCDC website with details on each company located in Laurens County. An updated was posted in February.

-On March 29 Lynn will be joining the Upstate Alliance and a photographer at ZF Transmissions to interview and film one of their employees. ZF and this employee were recommended by Piedmont Technical College

because this employee had participated in short-term training at the college and has been very successful in her new role at ZF. This feature is part of the Upstate Alliance's Skill Up initiative. More on that interview will be shared when it is made available.

-Lynn attended the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Rural Summit hosted by the SC DOC in Rock Hill in early March. There were about 150 attendees from across the state. The sessions were very informative and covered a wide variety of topics that are relevant to the rural communities in SC. One session in particular was focused on successful community festivals. A photo of the City of Laurens' July 4<sup>th</sup> "Lights the Night" light display was featured as a best practice. It's exciting to see other leaders in the state recognizing the great work being done in Laurens County.

-The LCDC has one new investor to commit their financial support to the LCDC since the last meeting. It is Cooper Motors in Clinton and we greatly appreciate their commitment to our efforts.

#### *Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman*

- A new one page information sheet was designed inhouse to provide to prospects. It's also a great tool for talking points detailing Laurens County. It is included in the board packets for reference.

- The annual meeting was held February 1 at Musgrove Mill. The panel format featuring updates from the local, regional and state level was well received and generated a lot of good questions and discussion.

- There have been 2 announcements since the beginning of the year. Shamrock Technologies was a \$19.4 million investment with 18 new jobs and went into the Connexial Center spec building in Gray Court. Blue Diamond Industries was an \$18 million investment with 92 jobs and went into the former Shaw Flooring building in Clinton. May have seen Project Trapezoid in the paper last week which is a \$250+ million existing industry expansion and 500 jobs that is working its way through the FILOT process. There are also 2 additional projects that staff is working now where one has a contract on the spec building in Clinton and the other a contract on the Muffin Mam building.

- Looking at RFIs – there have been 21 year to date. Compared to this point last year was 11.

- In December, the LCDC partnered with the SC Power Team and Laurens Electric Cooperative to host a workshop at PTC Higher Education Center for community leaders focused on understanding the economic development process. This workshop generated a lot of great discussion much of which centered around workforce development. As a result of this session and with the support of the Power Team and LEC, we will be able to host a follow-up workshop in April for educators that will focus solely on workforce development and the needs in Laurens County.

- In February, Jonathan had the honor of participating in the Presbyterian College Service Entrepreneurship Competition as a panel judge. Students came in from across the country to present their proposals which were judged by this panel. The winner, when announced, will be awarded paid tuition to attend Presbyterian College.

- The SC Automotive Summit was held in early March in Greenville and Jonathan had the opportunity to attend. This is one of the best manufacturing conferences in the state. Automotive executives from all over the world attend.

- As previously mentioned to the board, the LCDC is working with a lobbying group. As a part of that, Jonathan was able to attend recent meetings with the legislature group in Columbia. He attended the SC Economic Developer's Association reception and followed that up the next day with meetings at the state house with the Laurens County delegation along with other legislators from the Upstate.

#### *Facility Agreement – Jonathan Coleman*

- No vote can be made at this meeting but Jonathan will send out the information by email later today and call for an email vote with quorum. Amanda Munyan with the Chamber and Jonathan worked on this proposal together and agreed to bring it before both boards for consideration about the building moving forward. As all are aware, the LCDC is turning the current space at 291 Professional Park Rd. into a launch pad. Blue Diamond has expressed interest in using it as they set up their facility in Clinton. For further information: Currently the Chamber owns 75% of the building and the LCDC owns 25%. The new agreement will give the Chamber 100% ownership of the building at the end of a 63-month period starting April 1, 2022. During the 63-month period the LCDC will pay no rent payment to the Chamber and use the space at no cost other than \$700 per month for utilities in that portion of the building. On top of that the

LCDC will make an additional payment of \$22,000 to the Chamber which will pay off their mortgage. The Chamber will be responsible for all exterior maintenance. The LCDC will be responsible for interior maintenance and items within the footprint of the launch pad. Any upfits needed for the launch pad is the responsibility of the LCDC.

Interchange Justification Resolution – Jonathan Coleman

-In efforts to secure state and federal funds Representative Mark Willis has a \$1 million direct appropriation in the state budget to go toward an interchange justification / modification report for the area around Exit 19 on I-385 in Owings. These reports are very expensive and cost more than a million dollars. The funds that are appropriated are coming through the SC DOT and flow through the County. This resolution presented is proposing an interagency agreement with the County. The LCDC will technically manage the project and the total project cost is \$1,557,500. The LCDC will fund the remaining balance out of the Octagon Reinvestment Funds of \$557,500 which has a current balance of \$1.58 million. This is something that has been needed for some time and this report must be done to be able to ask for funds to fix or modify the interchange issues.

Investor / Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament – Jonathan Coleman

-The date is set for Friday, April 1 at Musgrove Mill Golf Club in Clinton. There is a full field of participants and all the support from the LCDC Board is appreciated. This is always a great event and provides a lot of opportunity for networking.

-Other upcoming sponsorships include the Presbyterian College and Wofford baseball game on April 20. The LCDC will have a tailgate setup, and everyone is invited. An official invitation will follow by email. The LCDC has committed to a sponsorship for the PC athletic program. Along with other similar events at football and basketball games this sponsorship includes some of their commercial airtime on ESPN and ESPN + App.

-Another notable event to mention will be on March 30 for Keep Laurens County Beautiful at the Laurens County Airport. Lt. Governor Pamela Evette will be there to participate along with Secretary Christy Hall from the SC DOT. An organized trash pickup is planned to follow the remarks and presentation event.

Other Reports:

None

Executive Session:

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

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An email from Jonathan Coleman was sent to all board members and media following the meeting on March 15 at 4:10 PM to cover two of the voting items.

We had two votes needed today at the LCDC Board Meeting but unfortunately did not have a quorum. I have listed two separate items below, and please reply all with a number and YES, NO, or ABSTAIN. The draft agreement and resolution are both attached. Please reply all by COB Friday.

1. Facility Agreement with the Chamber of Commerce
2. Interchange Justification Report Resolution

Results of voting:

Item 1: Yes – 14 / No – 2

Item 2: Yes - 16

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn S. Finley