

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – May 17, 2022

Attendees:

Shawn Bell, Dan Blakely, Tom Brooks, Jimmy Capps, Jeff Field, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Dr. David Pitts, Mayor Nathan Senn, Dr. Ameca Thomas, David Tribble, John Young

Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator), Jim Donahoo (LEC)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Whitney Lagrange, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Emil Finley (WLBG)

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 12:04 and gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials

Chairman Young asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting's agenda. Nathan Senn made the motion to approve the agenda and Jimmy Capps seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Young asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 11/16/21 meeting. Shawn Bell made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Nathan Senn seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes. Chairman Young then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 03/15/22 meeting. Shawn Bell made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Dr. Ameca Thomas seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for March and April 2022. The financials were accepted as information only.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- The annual spring job fair was held on May 4 at the PTC Center for Advanced Manufacturing. Graduating high school students looking for work were encouraged to come during the first hour. Laurens High School brought about 30 students to visit with the employers. The job fair was open to the general public after that. There were 24 hiring companies participating primarily from the manufacturing and health care sectors. SC Works tracked the attendees and estimated 50 individuals attending apart from the students.
- Area partner organizations are in the early planning stages for the annual 8th grader career showcase for this fall and are excited that it will be back in person. The date hasn't been set yet but if any board member organizations would like to participate and showcase their specific employment sector please let Lynn know. A diversified group of companies is always welcome.
- The March unemployment rates have been released. Laurens County was 3.5% and the state rate was 3.4%.
- During a recent follow up with the DSV team in April, local leadership shared that they are on track to be completely closed mid-year. But they did add that the Spartanburg facility was still under construction.
- The McKinley Cooper team will be at the LCDC office for the annual audit in person review on June 1 and plan to have the report ready for the board at the July meeting.
- There has been a little movement with the LCDC investor list since the last board meeting. Dropping support was The Parker Group and SynTerra both of Greenville and both at the Supporter Level. J Davis Construction downgraded from Partner Level to Supporter Level. Those three amounted to a loss of \$2,000 in annual support. Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough from Columbia made a new commitment at the

Advocate Level and also Carolina Power in Greer at the Supporter Level. This was a gain of \$1,500 in annual support. The LCDC currently has 36 investors.

- Since the last board meeting Lynn facilitated an upgrade for the financial system software in April. There were only a few small hiccups at first and now everything is working as expected.

Marketing Activity – Whitney Laqrangle

- The team at Berkshire Hathaway in Clinton helped the LCDC host a Meet & Greet in conjunction with Clinton's Food Truck Monday on April 4th. It was a great time networking and visiting with attendees and hope to do it again.

- LCDC is now a sponsor partner of PC Athletics this year. The sponsorship includes four commercials per broadcast on ESPN Plus and the Big South Network, three radio commercials and one live read on the radio broadcasts, football sign, basketball court sign, baseball sign, and logo on the website. LCDC staff has already hosted a sponsored baseball game on April 19th against Wofford. Due to a couple of meeting conflicts, we had a smaller showing than we had hoped, but it was a great evening spent building on relationships and cheering on the Blue Hose.

- On April 26th the LCDC hosted a Future of Workforce roundtable where Alysia Cook came back to facilitate a discussion on a new career and technology center for Laurens County.

- Whitney plans to get started on the asset story map for Laurens County once notice is received from the head volunteer planner that she's ready to hand it off. It will be a long process, but it will be beneficial to several county entities to host on their websites for county resource cohesiveness.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- To date there have been 38 requests for information (RFI) compared to this same point in 2021 which was 20. The total RFIs received in 2021 was the most seen in about 10 years. For all of 2020 there were 49. Interest in Laurens County is definitely up at this point for the year. Of these 38 RFIs, there are 10 that staff could not submit on due to a lack of qualifying available property meeting requirements. The success the county has seen lately results in not having available property any longer, so work has already started of how to solve that challenge.

-To expand on that further, there is a 300,000+ sq. ft. spec building about to begin construction in Woodfield Industrial Park in Fountain Inn by a private developer. Another private developer is looking at a 620,000 sq. ft. spec building in Hunter Industrial Park. There is another group looking at doing a spec building in the 100,000 sq. ft. range in Owings Industrial Park and another looking at possibly 500,000 sq. ft. spec building along Old Laurens Rd just north of Owings Industrial Park. There has never been a private developer spec building built in the county until the one in Woodfield and now there are multiples being explored. If these should come to fruition that will go a long way to solve the product crunch currently experiencing.

- The LCDC has been a part of several recent Upstate Alliance events. The Upstate Alliance hosted the inbound consultant event in April at BMW hosting 12 site consultants from across the US. There was a lunch and dinner that Lynn and Jonathan participated in. On May 18 Jonathan will be joining a group for lunch including 15 – 20 different country's consultant general or foreign officer. That will be held at ICAR in Greenville. Jonathan also recently traveled with the Upstate Alliance to Scotland for the World Foreign Direct Investment Forum. That was for three days and then there were two additional days of meetings with companies outside of that conference. Jonathan was also able to meet with the US Consultant General at the US Embassy and make a lot of good connections within the Scottish equivalent to the US Department of Commerce.

- The LCDC golf tournament held in April was a success with great networking. The support from board members is appreciated.

- The LCDC team has officially moved into the new office space on the square in Laurens.

Strategic Plan Update – Staff

- The LCDC recently partnered with LEC and the SC Power Team to offer a follow up strategic planning discussion called the Future of Workforce. One of big items that came out of the LCDC strategic plan was the need for a career and technology center in Laurens County. That need was also discussed at the first

economic development workshop held in December 2021. There was a lot of momentum and productive conversation that came from this second meeting. Dr. Rhett Harris, from School District 55, stepped forward to take the lead on working with both districts to put together a plan for one countywide facility with a partnership of both school districts. There are some architectural renderings in place and work is being done on a plan outlining the recommended programs and associated costs. The date to have this executive summary together is June 1 so the team will have a gameplan in hand to go and start seeking funding resources and support.

- The infrastructure task force is working through several projects now. The interchange justification modification report that was covered at the last board meeting and was awarded the \$1 million earmark from the state will be flowing through the DOT. There is a list agreed on by the committee as the seven top priority projects that represent needs throughout the county. There are six traditional infrastructure projects included along with the career and technology center as a nontraditional workforce pipeline infrastructure need.

Special Recognition – Jonathan Coleman & John Young

- Mr. Coleman shared that Jim Donahoo will be taking the place of Randy Garrett on the LCDC board representing Laurens Electric Cooperative. Mr. Garrett has participated on the LCDC board since its inception and will be retiring at the end of May. His service and commitment to the LCDC organization has been greatly appreciated and he will be missed in the group. Mr. Garrett served at the Chairman several years ago along with all other roles on executive committee. Mr. Garrett currently serves on the executive committee as the immediate past chairman and on the finance committee so Jim Donahoo will fill those roles until the end of this year when new officers are elected for 2023.

Other Reports:

None

Executive Session:

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley