

Laurens County Development Corporation

Board Meeting – Minutes

Tuesday – July 19, 2022

Attendees:

Justin Benfield, Dan Blakely, Tom Brooks, Jimmy Capps, Jeff Field, Mayor Stellartean Jones, Dr. David Pitts, Amanda Munyan, Dr. David O’Shields, Brown Patterson, John Young

Guests:

Thomas Higgs (Laurens County Administrator), Matt Phillips (McKinley Cooper)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Stan Yeargin (WLBG)

Chairman Young called the meeting to order at 12:05 and gave the invocation.

Minutes and Financials

Chairman Young asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting’s agenda. Brown Patterson made the motion to approve the agenda and Justin Benfield seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Young asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 05/17/22 meeting. Tom Brooks made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and Dan Blakley seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

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

2021 Audit Review – Matt Phillips, McKinley Cooper

-Matt Phillips provided a detailed review of the 2021 audit results and answered questions from the board. He reported that McKinley Cooper provided a “clean and unmodified” opinion of the LCDC financial position as of December 31, 2021, with no material weaknesses and no items of note to report. Mr. Phillips added that a new item will be implemented in the 2022 audit standards. It will be the lease standard. This standard requires companies to book operating leases within the financial statements.

Existing Industry Update – Lynn Finley

- In late May, Secretary of Commerce Lightsey was invited by the ZF Transmissions team for a visit and introduction to their facility. Jonathan and Lynn were honored to be included in this invitation and spent several hours at the facility meeting with leadership and participated in a detailed tour of the plant. ZF recently announced Tobias Brugger as the new plant manager in Gray Court. Mr. Brugger has been in Gray for a number of years and responsible for the 8-speed transmission operations.

- Recruitment and retention of employees continues to challenge industry. On June 29, the LCDC hosted an HR Roundtable event for industry HR leaders and several board member HR leaders attended as well. There was a great response to the topic and just over 30 attendees participated. The format was for peer discussion and idea sharing and there was a talent specialist from the DOC, a labor attorney, and recruiter from a large employment agency invited to join to share their insight. There was a lot of great participation and interaction and notes from the session have been passed along to other companies that couldn’t attend.

- The June unemployment rates are out. Laurens County and the State are both at 3.3%. This is slightly up for Laurens County from May which was 2.8%.

- There is a new update from DSV Logistics. It seems they are now planning to keep the Michelin tire distribution operation in Laurens for at least another year. They have extended their lease until June of 2023. Malouf continues their operation in their original location in the facility and is now employing approximately 60 people.

Marketing Activity – Whitney Laqrangle Reported by Jonathan Coleman

- LCDC continues to partner with PC Athletics this year and are working to plan a football event to coincide with one of the games. PSAs are made at each game about the LCDC sponsorship and the mission.

- The community planner that partnered with the LCDC strategic planning team last summer completed and released the story map project. Whitney is hard at work developing a visitor's guide story map for Laurens County based on this story map. It will include categories such as recreation, lodging, dining, history, etc. and each entry features a short write-up, a link to more information, as well as a map to the side showing where they are in Laurens County. It's a long process, but much has already been done. This should be beneficial to several county entities to host on their websites for county resource cohesiveness.

- The LCDC has had over 7,000 new users to our website over the past year.

Economic Development Activity – Jonathan Coleman

- Activity update: to date the LCDC has received 50 requests for information (RFI) compared to 36 at this same point in 2021 (last year was the busiest year in some time). For further comparison in both 2020 and 2019 each year had a total of 49.

- Before the next board meeting the county should have 4 projects that plan announce – Project SoCa which will occupy the former Muffin Mam building in Hunter Industrial Park with an \$18 million investment and 155 new jobs. Project Duke is a distribution and assembly facility going into Owings Industrial Park. It will be a \$16 million investment and 85 new jobs. Project Dogwood closed on the Clinton spec building recently and will be a \$17.25 million investment and 135 new jobs. Project Wrench is going into an existing industry in Fountain Inn and will be a \$25+ million investment. Another exciting aspect of these announcements is that they are spread throughout the county.

- The state general assembly changed the laws governing FILOTs this year and it went into effect July 1. The LCDC and county team has had meetings with Burr & Forman attorneys to discuss these changes and how it may affect how the county and the LCDC works with FILOTs agreements going forward. It appears to make the laws more complicated but the local team is still working through the changes and learning how it may impact funding sources for not only the LCDC and county but also for the cities and school districts.

- Jon will be attending Consultant Connect in Chicago the first week of August with the Upstate Alliance.

- The LCDC team is planning an open house / Christmas drop in at the new LCDC office on December 8.

Strategic Plan Update – Staff

- Senator Graham and his office submitted a request for \$15 million for a road improvement project that the LCDC highlighted in the strategic plan and the infrastructure improvement team also has in its plan. It hasn't been approved yet but this was his only project request he submitted for the upstate (besides a small project in the City of Clemson). The LCDC staff will continue to support this and do what is needed to assist in the approval.

Project Duke Funding Request – Jonathan Coleman

- As mentioned in the previous report, Project Duke is a \$16 million project and they are building a 200,000 sq ft facility in the Owings Industrial Park. Part of their site development is a sewer extension not on their site but to their site within the park. That cost came in at \$116,971. Jonathan is proposing that the LCDC fund that through the Octagon Reinvestment Fund which currently has a balance of approximately \$2.2 million. This would be a onetime expenditure to extend that sewer line to their site. It would be a public sewer line going forward that the LCWSC would maintain. Chairman Young stated that after hearing the request a motion and second is needed. Tom Brooks made a motion to pay the cost of the proposed sewer extension from the Octagon Reinvestment Fund and Justin Benfield seconded the motion. T Chairman Young called for a vote and the Board unanimously approved the motion.

Other Reports:

None

Executive Session:

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn S. Finley