***Laurens County Development Corporation***

Board Meeting – **Minutes**

Tuesday – May 16, 2017

Attendees:

Stan Bryson, Jon Caime, Jeff Field, Randy Garrett, Randy Lis, Mike Norrick, David Pitts, Rodney Smith, Steve West, John Young, Chris Lipp, and Collie Lehn

Guests:

Robbie Ellis & Dillon Qualls (ZF Transmissions), Danielle Besser (Upstate SC Alliance)

Staff:

Jon Coleman, Lynn Finley, Becca Sturgeon, Sandy Cruickshanks

Press:

Billy Dunlap (goLaurens.com), Wyatt Madison (WLBG)

Chairman Field called the meeting to order at 12:00 and gave the invocation.

*Minutes and Financials*

Chairman Field asked the Board for a motion to approve the meeting’s agenda. John Young made the motion to approve and Randy Garrett seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the agenda.

Chairman Field then asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the 3/21/17 meeting. Stan Bryson made the motion to approve the minutes as presented and John Young seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

Lynn Finley provided a recap of expenses for March and April 2017. The financials were accepted as information only.

*Executive Director’s Report – Jonathan Coleman*

* Reminder that the next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 25.
* Update on economic development activity: For the months of March and April combined there was a total of 17 formal requests for information which could be the most ever received in a two-month period. To compare to 2015 & 2016, there were 49 RFIs each year and have 28 so far in 2017. This doesn’t necessarily mean anything more than companies are looking but it does show more activity than in past years. By having a spec building to show again has also helped to get in front of more leads.
* Since the last board meeting Jon attended the SC Power Team annual economic development review conference and they unveiled a new statewide labor study to be complied and will be broken down by county labor sheds. Becca and Lynn attended the SCEDA Annual Meeting in early May.
* The Upstate Alliance held their annual meeting in March where Governor McMaster spoke. Upstate Alliance also hosted a one day site selector event in Atlanta which Jon attended.
* The annual golf tournament held in April was very successful and a great networking event.
* In the beginning stages of producing a workforce development video. Have contracted with a professional videographer and will include interviews with both high school students and young people working in manufacturing. The video will highlight several companies across the county featuring interesting and in demand careers. There will also be short promotional videos with drone footage of 3 featured property sites for marketing purposes.
* In conjunction with the County, the LCDC has applied for a grant to fund a transportation study on the area of I-385 between Exit 22 in Fountain Inn to Exit 19 in Owings. This is the first step in finding a solution for better traffic flow in this area. Staff expects to hear back on the grant within two months.
* Company updates: Bodycote in Fountain Inn hosted a grand opening and open house of their new aeronautics division in April. There is a new company called REMA USA relocating to the vacant building in Fountain Inn on the interstate. Their investment is approximately $2.2 million with 40 jobs. They make connectors for electric vehicles, forklifts, batteries, etc.
* Piedmont Tech hosted a workforce summit in April where local companies came to the CAM to hear information on opportunities and support available to them.

*Business & Education Partnership – Lynn Finley*

When visiting industries a common concern shared is the availability of a skilled and entry level workforce. With the Laurens County unemployment rate about 4%, this continues to be a challenge. We decided that it would be greatly beneficial to bring our industry leaders together to talk through issues and develop plans to solve. At the kickoff event, hosted in late April, there were about 20 people to attend representing 11 different companies in the county. There were 2 presenters: Chris Lipp, Director of Piedmont Tech CAM and Darryl Fournier, President of Mogul SC in Gray Court. They both shared information about being a part of groups similar to this in the past and the benefits they saw as a result. We had great discussion and a lot interest in moving forward. The next meeting is planned for June with an agenda and topics decided on at the kickoff. We are very optimistic about this group and interest in participating.

*Nomination for Treasurer – Stan Bryson*

Mr. Bryson, serving as Chairman of the nominating committee, presented John Young to serve as Treasurer to replace the vacancy of Frank Stovall. Coming from a committee no motion is needed. Chairman Field called for a vote which was unanimously approved.

*ZF Apprenticeship Update – Robbie Ellis and Dillon Qualls*

With the need for skilled workers increasing, ZF chose to implement an apprenticeship program to create a talent pipeline to assist them in meeting needs for maintenance technicians. An apprenticeship also offers options to students who do not have the means or desire to attend 4 year college. ZF currently has 7 apprentices in the program. They attend Piedmont Tech full time working toward their mechatronics degree while working and learning at the facility part-time. They see this as a great opportunity for all. The students earn their education, at no cost, while earning a wage and can expect a fulltime position at ZF afterwards earning approximately $60,000 per year. And ZF will have employees trained and onboard with their culture. A new class with be added in the fall with a group of youth apprentices participating in the dual enrollment program and will feed into the adult apprentice program which will also include newly graduated students. They plan to add approximately 25 to 30 this fall. ZF is also exploring options of adding another career to the program of CNC Machining. They are currently working through 91 applications of interest to fill the 25 – 30 openings. ZF has also committed to hiring 16 school teachers to work for 5 weeks this summer. They will be given a variety of assignments exposing them to different areas of the facility providing them with hands on experience and knowledge to take back to their classrooms. Dillon Qualls, a current ZF apprentice, shared about his experience and why he decided this was the right path for him. He was also recently recognized by Piedmont Tech as their top Mechatronic student.

*Other Reports:*

John Young (City of Laurens) – Exit 9 beautification project continues to move along. Estimates that they are a quarter of the way through the project. Working on refurbishing the Hunter Industrial Park interstate sign that was blown over and damaged in a recent storm. Looks like a new sign will need to be made based on the extent of damage.

David Pitts (School Dist. 56) – Clinton High School was recently recognized in US News & World Report as being ranked 32nd of high schools in SC.

Jon Caime (Laurens County) – The County branding survey is still open on multiple online channels and encourages everyone to participate.

*Executive Session:*

None

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn S. Finley