

Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation
July 20th – Regular Meeting – 2:00 pm
Technical College of the Lowcountry, New River Campus
100 Community College Drive, Bluffton, SC

Meeting Minutes

Present: Alsko, Arnette, Azallion-Kenny, Braun, Feaster, Dallas, Fobes, Gough, Murray, Perry, Shelton, Sulka, Williams
Absent: Rodriguez, Sisino, McElynn
Staff: O’Toole, Stone
Guests: Amundson, Brown, Croley, Fleming, Somerville, Passiment, Roucher, Zimmerman

Chair Feaster called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

Chair Feaster entertained a motion to enter executive session to review the confidential projects; Sulka moved; Murray seconded; approved unanimously; the Board entered executive session at 2:06 pm.

Chair Feaster entertained a motion to exit executive session; Sulka moved; Murray seconded; The Board exited executive session at 2:30 pm. No motions or votes were taken in executive session. Public session followed.

Chair Feaster entertained a motion to approve June 15th minutes, Sulka moved; Dallas seconded; approved unanimously.

Chair Feaster entertained a motion to appoint Verna Arnette as a new Beaufort County Economic Corporation board member; Murray moved; Sulka seconded; approved unanimously. Verna will be serving the remainder of Joe Mantua’s term for Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority.

Shelton reviewed BCEDC’s 2022-2023 operating budget. The BCEDC is planning on adding a 3rd staff member to assist with marketing efforts. In terms of fixed expenses, the BCEDC is flat from the previous year.

O’Toole provided an overview of the BCEDC’s 2023-2024 work plan. The BCEDC recently participated in onboarding for new board members. The BCEDC has transitioned away from marketing efforts that have not yielded results and new leads. The BCEDC is continuing to prioritize product development and will work to track each BR&E meeting in the upcoming year.

Update on open position.

O’Toole provided an update on the RFP for the Beaufort Commerce Park spec building. The BCEDC received one formal bid that was not appropriate to the terms submitted in the RFP. The BCEDC has secured an LOI from a developer interested in moving forward on the development of 72,000 sq ft +/- at the park. The developer is asking for a third year of carrying costs. Chair Feaster entertained a motion for the BCEDC to enter negotiations with Cohn Development and bring back a development agreement for final approval; Sulka moved; Dallas seconded; approved unanimously.

Chair Feaster entertained a motion to approve the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation to recommend to Beaufort County Council the due diligence and the pursuit of an option on 850 acres in Northern Beaufort County; Murray moved; Sulka seconded; approved unanimously.

O'Toole provided an update on the BCEDC's 2023-2024 goals. The BCEDC is recommending goals of \$70 Million capital investment, 250 newly created jobs, 80 BR&E meetings, 100 leads, and 100 retained jobs.

Robyn Zimmerman provided an update on her work with the BCEDC. Zimmerman has been working with the BCEDC to develop blogs for increased exposure on social media and the website. Current blog write ups have been on General Newton's Converge Keynote, Chairman Joe Passiment, Beaufort County as a business destination, and William Fugate of SkyDrive.

Nate Schaub provided an update on MindFlint's work with the BCEDC. MindFlint, a digital marketing firm, has been working with the BCEDC for 4 years. MindFlint participated in a brand development and marketing strategy process with the BCEDC to develop the BCEDC's core message – an exhilarating environment, a skilled workforce, and unparalleled support. MindFlint is currently working on website optimization and content marketing to improve organic search visibility. MindFlint assists the BCEDC with marketing material, the Converge Economic Summit, and social media. Looking ahead, MindFlint will be focusing on completing the SEO audit, design targeted promotional tools for upcoming trade missions, begin Converge 2024 planning, and ongoing communications campaign.

Fleming provided an update on SCA. SC Department of Commerce is looking to prioritize recruiting headquarters. There is consideration on incentives for headquarter projects and how best to attract such projects. Fleming reported that South Carolina manufacturing has grown at 1.3% and South Carolina is looking at how to combat a lack of available sites and buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 pm.