

**Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation**  
**May 8, 2025 – 2:00 pm**  
**Technical College of the Lowcountry - 100 Community College Drive, Bluffton, SC**

**Meeting Minutes**

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Board Members Present: Alsko, Amundson, Arnette, Azallion-Kenny, Barrientos, Braun, Brown, Cromer, Feaster, Fleming (SCA), Forster, Gilbert, Maxwell (SCA), Moore, Shelton, Sisino, Perry, Williams

Guests: Anna Maria “Tab” Tabernik (Beaufort County Council Vice-Chair)

Public: Steven Tully, F. Hassell, Mare Baracco, Chloe Appleby, Joe Fragale

Staff: O’Toole, Brunson, Warner, Borelli

Chair Braun called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Chair Braun entertained a motion by Shelton to go into Executive Session at 2:01 pm. Feaster seconded; approved unanimously.

Chair Braun entertained a motion to end Executive Session by Feaster; Cromer seconded; approved unanimously. Executive Session ended at 2:36 pm.

Introductions: BCEDC Board of Directors, BCEDC Staff and Guests made introductions. O’Toole introduced Alex Borelli, Intern with BCEDC.

Public Comment: None

Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the March 20, 2025, Meeting Minutes made by Arnette; Williams seconded; approved unanimously.

Shelton reviewed the FY 2024-2025 budget to date. TD Bank closeout should be finalized by the end of May 2025. BCEDC is operating well within their budget and should close out the year on budget.

Shelton reviewed the draft budget for FY 2025-2026. Final version will be presented to the BCEDC Board at the June 2025 meeting.

Brunson provided an update on the Accounting Request for Proposal. The RFP has been sent out with a return date of May 30, 2025. Shelton added that one requirement of the accounting firm included in the RFP is the ability to perform a full financial audit of the BCEDC.

Warner provided an overview and BCEDC Staff grant recommendation for Project Sun Spot. The project has a \$17.2M investment and looks to create 154 jobs with an average compensation of \$53K/year. BCEDC Staff recommended a grant of \$115,000 (\$746.75 per job) to remain competitive in the attraction of this project to Beaufort County over other SC counties in consideration. Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the Project Sun Spot grant at the level recommended by BCEDC Staff made by Williams; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.

Brunson provided an update on the recommended sale of Lot “F” in the Beaufort Commerce Park to Project Ceramic. The BCEDC Staff recommends holding any decision until September 2025 seeing as the project has not asked for the land purchase to be finalized. In the meantime, BCEDC Staff will meet with the City of Beaufort to brief Mayor and Council on this project. No action or motion was needed.

O’Toole provided an update on the Memorandum of Understanding and Request for Proposal responses for the 62-120 acres in the Whale Branch Area. Thomas & Hutton has submitted the lowest bid through cost sharing with the other developer on the property. Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the BCEDC to move forward with a budget of \$100,000 provided that the SC Department of Commerce commits to an anticipated 50% reimbursement of due diligence fees for the 62–120-acre Whale Branch area property moving toward a potential purchase agreement made by Perry; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.

O’Toole provided an update that the Lobeco Purchase – Tully Trask 117-acres will be before Beaufort County Council on Monday, May 12, 2025.

O’Toole provided an update on the Pinnacle Financial Partners Term Sheet along with a BCEDC Staff recommendation to decline entering into the credit facility agreement. This action is a result of County Council reducing the millage that BCEDC would receive for the upcoming fiscal year (2025-2026). Chair Braun entertained a motion to exit the credit facility agreement proceedings made by Cromer; Arnette seconded; approved unanimously.

O’Toole provided an update on the Site & Job Fund. All amounts in the May 2025 column of the report, totaling \$141,053 have been previously approved. Grants for Project Ceramic (\$10,000), Sun Spot (\$115,000), HIVE Bluffton Landing Pad (\$130,000), Nursing Retention Program (\$48,000), Gullah Farmers Cooperative (\$25,000), and Site Planning for McLeod (\$100,000 – net \$50,000) are represented in the June column as placeholders for the payout to occur in June 2025 or later. The grant for Project Laundry (\$100,000) continues to carry over as well. Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the Site & Job Fund as printed, with the modification of the net \$50,000 on the McLeod Site due diligence, made by Feaster; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.

Warner gave an update on the Grant Performance Agreement for Project Market (Lowcountry Fresh Market & Café) in which BCEDC provided a \$75,000 grant with a target investment of \$4,664,000 and 35 jobs. The actual investment made by the project in the grant period was \$8,832,991 (189%) and 43 jobs (122%). BCEDC Staff’s recommendation is to release Lowcountry Fresh from their grant obligation and send a satisfaction. Chair Braun entertained a motion to release Lowcountry Fresh Market & Café from their grant obligation and a satisfaction letter to be sent made by Cromer; Perry seconded; approved unanimously.

#### BCEDC Staff Activity Highlights:

- O’Toole provided a scorecard update. The BCEDC is above the target in capital investment with the projection of being well over the goal of \$70M by the end of the year. The job creation numbers are close to target with Project Sun Spot’s projections not included, and possibly being held until the next fiscal year. Product development is above the fiscal year goal. Lead generation, pushed by current trips in coordination with the SC Power Team and SC Department of Agriculture, continues to grow and is expected to be near the fiscal year goal after Select USA.

Wages for jobs created this year are at a \$74,322 compensation level.

- O'Toole provided a project update since the last BCEDC Board Meeting: Project German – Grant check presentation 3/21/25, Project Sabal – Grant check presentation 5/2/25, Project Micro – Ribbon cutting 4/11/25, Project Sun Spot – Looking at GlassWRX (\$17M, 154 jobs, \$53K avg), Project Cloud – Going before Beaufort County Council, Development at 355 William Hilton Parkway – BCEDC provided economic impact study for potential medical project, Project Ceramic – Continuing to look at Beaufort Commerce Park, Novant Bluffton – Groundbreaking 4/8/25, and Project Memorial – Groundbreaking 5/7/25.
- Brunson gave an update on marketing.
  - The BCEDC website is performing at a 3.75% increase year-over-year and organic Facebook performance has increased 42% year-over-year.
  - Brunson updated the final numbers on the marketing campaign surrounding the MCAS Beaufort Airshow. A 60 second ad was shown ten times per day (20 times over the entire event) with a total viewing audience of 100,000 people over both days.
  - Brunson updated the final numbers on the Google social media marketing campaign surrounding the RBC Heritage. A total spend of \$1,947.31 resulted in 45,893 impressions (238.2% increase over 2024). A Beaufort County Welcome Guide and Sales Lead Form were provided in the ad. Both static and video ads were used in the campaign.
- Warner updated the Business Retention and Expansion program. FY 24-25 had a goal of 75 visits and is currently at 78 visits (104% of goal). Two notable visits were the Waddell Mariculture Center and New Leaf Produce. A BRE spotlight was provided on SQUAN in which the visit particulars were covered, connections requested, and an example was given about how BCEDC's BRE Program is one of only two communities that actively reaches out to engage SQUAN over 21 states and multiple communities therein.
- O'Toole updated project activity with Project Laundry continuing their build in the Beaufort Commerce Park and the leader of Project Sun Spot speaking at SC Competes event.
- Brunson updated the CS Instruments project with the check presentation and new building progress in Bluffton. Announcement through SC Department of Commerce pending.
- Warner provided an update about the TL+CO ribbon cutting at which John O'Toole was able to speak in front of business partners of TL+CO and Susie Shannon, of the SC Council on Competitiveness, was able to continue the conversation of how South Carolina is poised to continue growth in key target sectors.
- Brunson updated Project Memorial: Beaufort Memorial Groundbreaking.
- Brunson updated the Community Involvement section with Greater Bluffton Chamber Golden Oyster Awards in March, Hampton Lake Women's Group Panel Discussion in April and Hiring Our Heros Event with Hilton Head Island Bluffton Chamber of Commerce in May.
- O'Toole updated the Community Involvement section with the TCL State of the College in April with speakers from Novant Health.
- O'Toole updated the board with the Marketing Missions carried out recently with Aero Montreal with SC Competes, Netherlands and Belgium with the SC Power Team and SC Department of Agriculture, and the Blue Food Summit in London with the SC Department of

Agriculture.

- Brunson provided an update on OUEDI in Kansas City and the continuing education she has received through the program so far.
- Warner provided an update on the SEDC American South Site Selector Summit that he attended in Atlanta, the inside look into the site selection process, insightful panels and networking.
- O'Toole provided an update on upcoming staff activity including Select USA, South Coast Cyber Summit and SCEDA Annual Meeting.

Warner gave an update on the formation of a Board of Directors Fundraising Committee and potential second event.

Maxwell gave an update on SCA and their marketing efforts.

O'Toole reminded Board members that, if they have not already, to sign their Conflict of Interest and Non-Disclosure Agreements.

New Business: Warner updated the board with a reminder about the upcoming Disaster Recovery Roundtable on May 20, 2025.

Chair Braun entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:57 pm by Cromer; Perry seconded; all voted in favor.