

Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation
June 26, 2025 – 2:00 pm

Culinary Institute of the South at Technical College of the Lowcountry, 1 Venture Drive, Bluffton, SC

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Alsko, Amundson, Arnette, Arvantides (Bluffton/DRCI), Azallion-Kenny, Brown, Gilbert, Maxwell (SCA), Rodriguez, Shelton, Perry, Williams

Guests: Alice Howard (Beaufort County Council Chair), Anna Maria “Tab” Tabernik (Beaufort County Council Vice-Chair), Selma Davis (New Leaf Produce), Danny Black (SCA)

Public: Anna (Office of Rep. Nancy Mace), Brian Sullivan (Palmetto Breeze), Joe Fragale, Mike Covert, Elvio Tropeano, MD, Graham Trask

Staff: O’Toole, Brunson, Warner, Borelli

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny is acting Chair for June 26, 2025, BCEDC Board of Directors Meeting.

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion by Alsko to go into Executive Session at 2:04 pm. Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion to end Executive Session by Alsko; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously. Executive Session ended at 2:44 pm.

Introductions: BCEDC Board of Directors, BCEDC Staff and Guests made introductions.

Public Comment: Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny noted that Public Comment should be limited to no more than 3 minutes per speaker.

- Brian Sullivan (Palmetto Breeze) made a public comment regarding the meetings between BCEDC and Palmetto Breeze and the way that public transportation fits within the “Beaufort County balance wheel”. Palmetto Breeze would like to be scheduled for a future BCEDC Board of Directors’ agenda for a full presentation. 2:48-2:51 pm.
- Graham Trask made a public comment regarding the timing of BCEDC meetings (i.e. start time of the meeting, executive session length, and resuming public session), public not having access to the board member information packet, the volume of the live stream, and voiced his concerns regarding BCEDC incentive policy. Mr. Trask was asked to end his public comment by Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny after 4 minutes. 2:52-2:56 pm.

Presentation: New Leaf Produce – Selma Davis gave a presentation about her work with New Leaf Produce, a container-based vertical farming on St. Helena. Selma Davis outlined the past accomplishments, present workings, and future vision. Currently serving a 12-mile radius for delivery, pop-up market on Saturdays, and serves as a compliment to other local farming operations. An ask was made of the BCEDC Board to consider a grant for the plans of New Leaf Produce moving forward based on its potential for education purposes and the continued need for

fresh produce.

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion to approve May 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes made by Perry; Alsko seconded; approved unanimously.

Shelton gave a Treasurer's Report: The closeout of the TD Bank account was originally slated to be finalized by the end of May 2025 but should be finalized by the end of June 2025. The current Pinnacle balance as of May 30, 2025 is \$1,560,635 including a Pinnacle deposit of \$4,125.61 in earned interest income. Shelton conducted an internal audit of 9 transactions from the Pinnacle account to which BCEDC staff provided all information within 24 hours and were found to be in compliance with the BCEDC Financial and Reimbursement Policies. These transactions accounted for \$27,615 in expenses. Board Members were given copies of the BCEDC Financial and Reimbursement Policies for them to review and sign a letter of acknowledgement. Pro Forms have been put in place for projects, grants and acquisitions to ensure that the BCEDC Board is completely informed of all details and rationale.

Shelton reviewed the FY 2024-2025 budget to date. Total income YTD is 57%. The current income received is 100%. Marketing is currently at 98% of budget. Administration is currently at 98% of budget. The staff budget is currently at 77% of budget. A re-formatting of the layout is proposed for the new budget FY 2025-2026. The mileage reimbursement noted in a previous meeting is not a car payment, but reimbursement for the mileage travelled. Total expenses are at 98% of budget, and we expect to finish the year on plan.

Shelton reviewed the budget for FY 2025-2026. Revisions were made to the proposed budget to account for the changes in revenue projected for the next fiscal year. The income line will now be broken out into the individual revenue streams and separated into available funds and reimbursement funds. Expense budgets have been reduced to show the anticipated changes in funding. The budget item under Legal and Professional Services has been allotted \$55,000 for the anticipated cost of the monthly financial services along with the full financial audit.

Brunson provided an update on the Accounting Request for Proposal. All RFPs have been received and the BCEDC Staff recommend Moss & Yantis for their accounting services. Since the same firm is not allowed to perform both monthly accounting services and audit services, BCEDC Staff recommended Mauldin & Jenkins as the audit firm after confirming the level of audit required by Beaufort County. Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion to move forward with Moss & Yantis for monthly accounting services beginning July 1, 2025, and move forward with Mauldin & Jenkins for an audit of FY 2024-2025 (pending confirmation of audit level) by Shelton; Perry seconded; Discussion: Brown disagrees with audit pricing. Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny called for a vote, 8 voting in favor, 1 (Brown) voting not in favor; motion approved.

Brunson provided an update on the MOU on 62-120 Acres South of Whale Branch. The original approval of the board was for \$25,000 per acre or the appraised value. The appraised value of the property has come back at \$23,000 per acre. BCEDC Staff recommends the approval of the MOU on 62-120 Acres South of Whale Branch at the new value of \$23,000 per acre and moving forward with a modified Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion to move forward with the new amended MOU for the appraised price of \$23,000 per acre and moving forward on the modified Phase I ESA by Perry; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.

O'Toole provided an update on the Lobeco Purchase – Tully Trask 117-acres. With the approval of the purchase by the board, a Voluntary Clean-up Contract (VCC) proposal was obtained from Department of Environmental Services (DES). That proposal has been received, and BCEDC Staff will address the board in July with the costs associated with the items the BCEDC will be responsible for and monitoring. The site and job fund will be updated to show these costs and schedule. BCEDC intends to close mid-July. The current property owner has also asked if use of property and time to remove personal items will be allowed post-closing. The Utility Tax Credit (UTC) funds from Dominion Energy will be used to offset the partial cost of the land purchase. Advisory only.

O'Toole provided an update on the Contract for Lead Generation. BCEDC has signed a lead generation contract with William Fugate, formerly with SkyDrive, which has produced 4 leads thus far for foreign investment looking in both the Beaufort Landing Pad and the upcoming Bluffton Landing Pad. The contract was for \$4,500. William Fugate has also been in discussions with the SC Department of Commerce's Landing Pad Program which has interest in branding landing pad sites around the state. There is a possibility of William Fugate leasing the landing pad space for foreign investment business interests. Advisory only.

O'Toole provided an update on the RFP for Legal Services. Beaufort County Staff had mentioned that the current hourly rate of \$550 per hour is high in their opinion. BCEDC Staff will use the Beaufort County approved bid rate list from their Request for Proposal to review and potentially select a new firm. BCEDC Staff will bring their findings back to the board at the July meeting.

Brunson provided an update on the Recommendation on Beaufort Commerce Park Spec Building 2. GEL and BCEDC have been reviewing Beaufort Commerce Park development agreements from 2006, prior to the current SOLOCO stormwater requirements, and have had a meeting with the City of Beaufort Planning Department to discuss. The City of Beaufort has agreed to move forward with the 2006 development agreements for stormwater requirements. Both interested developers have been informed of the stormwater requirements and have been asked to provide an updated cost estimate.

O'Toole provided an update on the Site & Job Fund. The amount in the April column of \$4,461,218 has been verified by Beaufort County as being the funds currently in holding at the county. The funds in the May column totaling \$141,053 have been submitted for reimbursement and received. In June, the approved \$130,000 grant payment was made to the Town of Bluffton for the Landing Pad project. No action is needed. The updated Site & Job Fund is now showing that some expenditures that had been listed for the current fiscal year, will be carried over to the next fiscal year. The FY 2025-2026 projection shows the 0.3 mil that is expected from the county and expected expenditures in July, including the Lobeco purchase. Even with the cut in funding, BCEDC Staff believes that we are in a good position entering into the next year. Advisory only.

O'Toole gave an update on Scheduling a Facilitated Strategic Discussion with Municipal and County Leaders. The thought is to provide an open forum for municipal and county leaders to discuss economic development and answer questions in a facilitated session. Perry recommended that each municipality and the county have separate one-on-one meetings first, followed by a group session. Also agreed with Perry that it would yield more open feedback and dialogue. BCEDC Staff to follow-up.

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 the target at 96%. O'Toole clarified that the current average job incentive since inception is \$1,300. The \$28,165,278 is the number of incentives given to projects by the state over 8 years. Product development is above the fiscal year goal.
- Warner provided a project update: Project Sun Spot – Looking at GlassWRX (\$17.2M, 161 jobs, \$56,980 avg) and had an incentive discussion with the SC Department of Commerce, Project Ceramic – Continuing to look at Beaufort Commerce Park, Beaufort Commerce Spec Building 2 – promising developments with the City of Beaufort and waiting on developer updated estimates, Project Cloud – Lease is with County Council, Development at 355 William Hilton Parkway is continuing, Project German – CS INSTRUMENTS – set to announce through SC Department of Commerce, Project Laundry continues to move forward with construction of their facility, BCEDC Staff visited their new office currently under construction in the Bluffton COVE Building.
- Brunson provided an update on Project Ward – Gay Fish Company – as their shrimp dock rebuild and replacement project is underway. SC Department of Agriculture and BCEDC to visit the site on June 27, 2025.
- O'Toole provided an overview of the Foreign Direct Investment meetings with BCEDC, USCB, and Japanese companies who are looking at the Beaufort and Bluffton Landing Pads, along with the meetings they have had with the SC Department of Commerce's Landing Pad Program manager and the SC Department of Commerce's Tokyo Office.
- Brunson gave an update on marketing.
 - The Select USA Summit Campaign Results were \$2,182.17 spent resulting in 111,141 impressions, 1,632 ad clicks. This was done via ads on LinkedIn and Meta (Facebook).
 - BCEDC LinkedIn Performance over the last 30 days: 4,701 impressions. The top performing posts were Billy Keyserling's Order of the Palmetto at 398 impressions and the Converge segment featuring Beaufort County Administrator, Michael Moore, at 425 impressions.
 - BCEDC Facebook Performance over the last 30 days: 3,500 views and 1,400 reach. The top performing posts were Blakely Williams' Spotlight at 1,900 views and the BCEDC commercial property listing at 105 views.
- Warner provided an update on the Disaster Recovery Resource Roundtable that was held on 5/20/2025.
- Warner updated the Business Retention and Expansion program. FY 24-25 had a goal of 75 visits and is currently at 84 visits (112% of goal) to end the year. A BRE spotlight was provided on four of the most recent BRE visits along with the specific follow-up that occurred from each.
- Brunson provided an update on the SCEDA Annual Conference, where she was awarded the Sloan W. Gamble scholarship for OU EDI. Additionally, there was an opportunity to try

the new VisionSC virtual reality site visit program. BCEDC looks to work with SCA in using this technology to further promote the region.

- Borelli provided an update on all that he has learned thus far during his internship with the BCEDC.
- Brunson provided an update on upcoming BCEDC Staff Activity.
 - Following the presentation to the County Council Finance, Administration & Economic Development Committee, BCEDC will continue to present quarterly.
 - USCB Multi-Purpose Area/Sports Complex Community Meeting will be held June 26, 2025.
 - Brunson sits on the Hilton Head Island Airport Layout Plan Update Stakeholder Group, and the first meeting will be held July 2025.
 - Brunson has been involved with the United Way Pathway to Self Sufficiency since March 2025.
- Warner gave an update on the formation of a Board of Directors Fundraising Committee/potential second event and the new Standard Operating Procedures that are being defined for BCEDC.

There was no update from SCA.

O'Toole thanked all board members for signing their Conflict of Interest and Non-Disclosure Agreements.

O'Toole went over the proposed meeting calendar for FY 2025-2026 along with where to find the listing of agendas for BCEDC Board of Directors Meeting on the website.

There was no New Business.

Vice Chair Azallion-Kenny entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:37 pm by Perry; Shelton seconded; all voted in favor.