Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation
August 21, 2025 – 2:00 pm
Palmetto Electric Cooperative – New River Community Room, 1 Cooperative Way, Hardeeville, SC

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Alsko, Azallion-Kenny, Braun, Brown, Feaster, Forster (Designee for Toomer), Gilbert, Marshall (Designee for Cromer), Shelton, Sisino, Perry, Williams, Willis

Guests: Alice Howard (Beaufort County Council Chair), Anna Maria “Tab” Tabernik (Beaufort County Council Vice-Chair), York Glover (Beaufort County Council), Michael Moore (Beaufort County), Hank Amundson (Beaufort County), Paul Arvantides (DRCI), Nicte Barrientos (Town of HHI), Kay Maxwell (SCA), Graci Hiers (SCA)

Public: Lorene Nans, Graham Trask

Staff: O’Toole, Brunson, Warner

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

No Executive Session.

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

Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve July 24, 2025, Meeting Minutes made by Feaster; Perry seconded; approved unanimously.

Shelton gave a Treasurer’s Report and reviewed the FY 2025-2026 budget. Current balance in the Pinnacle Financial Partners sweep account is $1,390,056 and the operating account is $52,000 with interest earned totaling $5,900. A review of the operating account shows use of appropriate protocols and signoffs for all employee expenses. The FY 2025-2026 budget starts off with a balance of $1,660,276. Anticipated income, primarily from county and municipal dues, comes to $604,750 and reserve funds totaling $1,055,526. Available funds account for amounts that we hold that are not in the operating budget, totals $4,038,165. Current category labeled “Cost of Goods Sold” will be renamed in coordination with the new accounting firm. Conversations have taken place with the new accounting firm, Moss & Yantis, regarding moving to an accrual-based accounting system instead of the current cash-based accounting system so that the timing of expenses is more accurately represented. Discussions with Mauldin & Jenkins regarding the audit have begun. The $25,000 cost for the audit has been incorporated into the operating budget. Total operating expenses budgeted total $766,148, an increase of 13% over last year. An overview of initiatives put in place over the last year for financial reporting was provided.

Chair Braun provided remarks related to BCEDC’s continued eagerness to be a fully transparent organization and disputed some claims that had been made.

O’Toole provided an overview of the BCEDC Grant Process through Project Profile Sheet, Pro Forma, BCEDC Board Approval/Sign-Off, Performance Agreement, Annual Reporting, and Final Reporting

Submittal resulting in Letter of Grant Satisfaction or Pro Rata Repayment (Clawback). All of this is submitted to Beaufort County for approval.

Amundson provided an overview of the new use of BCEDC Site & Job Fund Account that was approved by committee and now goes before full Beaufort County Council in September. Chair Braun asked for BCEDC Board feedback. The BCEDC Board endorsed the proposed new uses of the BCEDC Site & Job Fund Account.

Brunson provided an update on the Request for Proposal responses from the list of qualified firms for the due diligence and Voluntary Cleanup Contract (VCC) monitoring on the newly acquired Lobeco Property. Davis|Floyd came in at the lowest bid and would also continue to work with GEL, the current environmental engineering firm already working on the property. BCEDC Staff recommend moving forward with Davis|Floyd as the engineering firm for this project. Chair Braun entertained a motion to move forward with Davis |Floyd as the engineering firm for the Lobeco Property made by Feaster; Shelton seconded; Discussion: The scope of work pertains to the items listed (VCC Requirements, Conceptual Plan, Infrastructure Evaluation and Costs, Developable Acreage, Wetland Delineation, Geotechnical, Cultural Resources, Threatened & Endangered Species, Boundary Survey, Topographic Survey, etc.) and the due diligence will only proceed to the necessary point. Chair Braun called for a vote; approved unanimously.

O'Toole provided an update on the BCEDC Freedom of Information Act Fee Schedule that was recommended by Beaufort County Council for BCEDC Board to approve as a new policy. This has been based off the Beaufort County model. Modification of the fee schedule to include the language "hourly rate". Fee schedule to be posted online. Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the BCEDC Freedom of Information Act Fee Schedule as discussed made by Shelton; Alsko seconded; approved unanimously.

O'Toole provided an update on the Site & Job Fund including the Lobeco Site Engineering that was approved and the $75,000 grant for Project Glory has been removed as the project has chosen another site. Amundson added that the amounts found in the Site & Job Fund are housed in the County and are only paid out as a reimbursement request. Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the amended Site & Job Fund made by Feaster; Perry seconded; approved unanimously.

Maxwell provided the SCA update via a handout and went over the announced jobs and investment amounts, SC Department of Commerce reception, SCEDA Meeting, Marketing Mission in Northeast, Site Consultants Meeting (Brantley Strickland – Colleton County), SCA Board Meeting September 23, ANUGA Food Conference (Kelli Brunson – BCEDC), SCEDA Mid-Year, Marketing Mission to UK and Ireland, October 23 Drive and Pull Event, November Atlanta Site Consultant Event, November Switzerland Roadshow (SCA and HSB Law Firm), December 2 Last SCA Board Meeting/Christmas Celebration, December 8-12 Ontario Marketing Mission.

Chair Braun provided an update on the BCEDC Board of Directors Appointments and Term Limits. Three board members' terms have recently expired that wish to renew their term on the BCEDC Board of Directors (Feaster, Sisino and Shelton). Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the renewal of Feaster, Sisino and Shelton to a new term made by Perry; Azallion-Kenny seconded; approved unanimously.

BCEDC Staff provided a written activity report. Brunson highlighted the SCEDA Membership Meeting which the BCEDC staff has been asked by SCEDA to present on a panel “Discovering and Maximizing Your Community’s Niche” during the meeting. Warner touched on the Business Retention and Expansion numbers at 14 visits completed (19% for the year) so far. BRE Spotlight: BRE Team. O’Toole added that SCEDA has pointed out that BCEDC is very good with the BRE program and will include it in next week’s panel discussion. Maxwell asked if an updated company list could be shared.

Brunson went over the proposed meeting calendar for FY 2025-2026 with the September meeting being at Palmetto Electric Cooperative New River Community Room at 1 Cooperative Way in Hardeeville. Thank you to Feaster and Palmetto Electric Cooperative for hosting the upcoming meeting. The upcoming meeting schedule has been posted.

Public Comment: Chair Braun reminded all public comments will be capped at 3 minutes per speaker. Graham Trask (2:55 pm – 2:59 pm) – Public comment regarding public comment, FOIA and BCEDC grants.

New Business: Perry covered the proposed HHI Airport taxiway expansion that could impact 12 business properties, BRE program to be involved in protecting HHI businesses. Brunson is on the HHI Airport Master Plan committee. Town of HHI and BCEDC will work together in dealing with problems facing the impacted businesses and provide updates.

Chair Braun entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:03 pm by Perry; Shelton seconded; approved unanimously.