

Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation
December 18, 2025 – 2:00 pm
Culinary Institute of the South at Technical College of the Lowcountry
Gillis, Sampson, Chiacchiero Classroom – Room 215 A, B, & C
1 Venture Drive, Bluffton, SC 29910

Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Braun, Carnes, Cromer, Forster (Designee for Toomer), Gilbert, Perry, Shelton, Stone (Designee for Arnette), Tabernik, Williams

Guests: Alice Howard (Beaufort County Council), Michael Moore (Beaufort County), Hank Amundson (Beaufort County), Nicole Wood (Beaufort County), Paul Arvantides (DRCI), Evan Welsh (DRCI), Nicte Barrientos (Town of Hilton Head Island) Graci Heirs (SCA), Tyson Jackson (SCA)

Public: Nick Hammond (Davis & Floyd), Katie Ryan (Student)

Staff: O'Toole, Brunson, Warner

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

Chair Braun entertained a motion to approve the appointments of Mary Lee Carnes, Technical College of the Lowcountry Designee through June 2028, and Mayor Alan Perry, Town of Hilton Head Island Designee through June 2027, for BCEDC Board of Directors made by Cromer; Williams seconded; approved unanimously.

Chair Braun entertained a motion by Williams to go into Executive Session at 2:02 pm. Cromer seconded; approved unanimously.

Chair Braun entertained a motion to end Executive Session by Tabernik; Cromer seconded; approved unanimously. Executive Session ended at 2:28 pm.

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

Chair Braun tabled the Board Meeting Minutes from October 16, 2025, meeting until January 15, 2026, meeting.

Shelton gave a Treasurer's Report and reviewed the FY 2025-2026 budget. No line items of concern in the Treasurer's review of the monthly financial report. All items are on budget at this time.

Shelton gave an overview of the draft financial audit with only one issue concerning the filing classification of a land purchase which was easily corrected by the accounting firm. Recommendations have been made to address any findings associated with the audit.

O'Toole gave a brief overview of the BoardSource Best Practices information as requested by Tabernik at an earlier date.

O'Toole provided an update of the BCEDC Vacation and Sick Leave Policies, a recommendation that was made by the auditors during the audit to help better define the organization's liabilities. Shelton had questions and offered suggestions as to the standardization of vacation allotment based on position and vacation carryover from fiscal year to fiscal year. Chair Braun entertained a motion to accept the BCEDC Vacation and Sick Leave Policies as written, with continued conversations and possible edits in the future, made by Williams; Cromer seconded; approved unanimously.

Brunson provided a Marketing Update including social media performance, BCEDC website performance, behind the scenes material from the mayoral segments filming for the upcoming Converge event and a grant award from Santee Cooper for further targeted marketing in New York and Florida.

Warner provided an update on Project Cutter, the location of a US Coast Guard Training Facility. A collaborative effort between BCEDC, Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Beaufort Military Enhancement Committee, and the Defense Community Partnership Task Force made for a comprehensive submittal of the Naval Hospital Beaufort site for the project. Special thanks to all the federal and state delegates, Governor McMaster, Beaufort County Council, and all the mayors of the Beaufort County municipalities that offered letters and meetings of support.

O'Toole provided an update on the Letter of Intent from Developer for Beaufort Commerce Park Spec Building. BCEDC Staff has received an LOI with conversations continuing at a meeting on Monday, December 22, 2025.

O'Toole provided an update on BCEDC Staff to Proceed with EPA Grant Application regarding the 117 Aces at Lobeco. The timing for grant applications has been changed due to the government shutdown. The next window for application will be Fall 2026.

Brunson provided an update on the Sale of 31.79 Acres in the Beaufort Commerce Park. The land purchase Letter of Intent was presented to the City of Beaufort Council and received positive feedback. Currently waiting on signed Letter of Intent; a draft Purchase Sale Agreement was sent to City of Beaufort for review.

O'Toole provided an update on the non-binding Letter of Intent to Lease Office Space at the COVE for the Town of Bluffton to continue in their planning for the building. This will allow the Town of Bluffton to draft a lease agreement which will be brought forth to the Board of Directors before signing. Chair Braun entertained a motion to provide the Town of Bluffton with a non-binding Letter of Intent to Lease Office Space at the COVE made by Williams; Perry seconded; approved unanimously.

O'Toole provided an update on the Purchase and Sale Agreement for 70+/- Acres South of Whale Branch. Chair Braun entertained a motion to defer entering into the Purchase and Sale Agreement and/or completing any more due diligence on the 70+/- acre parcel until the whole project has completed the planning process through Beaufort County made by Tabernik; Cromer seconded; approved unanimously.

Warner provided an update on the Site Enhancement Grants. SC Department of Commerce denied the Site Enhancement Grant for Extension of Natural Gas Infrastructure in the Beaufort Commerce

Park. BCEDC Staff will circle back for more information to be used in future grants of this type. SC Department of Commerce has approved the Site Enhancement Grant for Construction of 25,000 SF Pad Site on Lot D in the Beaufort Commerce Park. Additionally, \$75,000 in UTC funds from Dominion Energy have been added to this project, thus making the BCEDC Site and Job Fund contribution \$125,744 (31% of the total project cost).

O'Toole provided an update on the Site and Job Fund. No change, no action. The current balance in the account is \$3,182,377 provided by Beaufort County staff on 12/16/25.

BCEDC Staff provided a written activity report. Highlights included job wage growth over 5 years, the Beaufort County MSA's growth compared to the national, state, and other local labor markets, OU EDI Continuing Education, Town of Port Royal Downtown Business Breakfast, BlacQuity Graduation, 2025 USC Economic Outlook Conference, 2025 SC State of the Port, SCEDA Lunch and Learn, 2025 Asian Cultural Studies Conference, and speaking with Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce's Leadership and Junior Leadership Programs.

Brunson went over the proposed meeting calendar for FY 2025-2026. The upcoming meeting schedule has been posted.

Heirs provided the SCA update via a handout and reviewed the announced jobs and investment amounts, Project Circular announcement in Bamberg County, Hampton Lumber groundbreaking in Allendale, Site Consultants Meeting (Brantley Strickland – Colleton County), Anuga Food Conference (Kelli Brunson – BCEDC), 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.

Public Comment: None

New Business: Welcoming Nicole Wood – Deputy Administrator Beaufort County. Thanking Hank Amundson for his years of service and guidance at Beaufort County and wishing him well, and continued collaboration, in his new position with Lowcountry Council of Governments.

Chair Braun entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:29 pm by Cromer; Perry seconded; approved unanimously.