



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

*Thursday, September 17, 2026 | 2:00pm
The COVE, 97 Progressive Street, Suite 120, Bluffton, SC 29910*

Attendance:

BCEDC Board Members: Joel Braun, Chair; Chris Forster; Ethan Cox; Blakely Williams; Andrea Sisino; Brian Jackson; Tab Tabernik; Van Willis; Melissa Azallion Kenny; Alan Perry; Karen Gilbert

Invited Guests: Mike Moore, Nicole Wood, Alice Howard, Andy Fulgham, Kay Maxwell, Paul Arvantides, William Fugate, Michelle Mealer

BCEDC Staff: John O'Toole, Kelli Brunson

Members of the Public: Amanda Patel, Felice LaMarca, Graham Trask, Elvio Tropeano, Mike Covert, Ryan Antley

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation (BCEDC) Board of Directors was called to order at 2:01pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Executive Session

At 2:03 p.m., a motion was made by Andrea Sisino to enter executive session. The motion was seconded by Tab Tabernik. Motion passed unanimously.

At 2:20 p.m., a motion was made by Blakely Williams to exit executive session. The motion was seconded by Perry. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Introductions

Introductions were made.

5. Approve Minutes - August 13, 2026

A motion was made by Andrea Sisino to approve the August 13, 2026, meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Azallion-Kenny. Motion passed unanimously.

6. SCA Update - PALM

The Board received an SCA update regarding Pathway to Air Logistics Mobility made by Kay Maxwell and William Fugate.

7. Update on Audit FY 2025-2026

The Board received an update regarding the FY 2025-2026 audit. The draft audit has been presented to the Board of Directors. The final draft will be provided at the October board meeting.

8. Review and Approve Budget FY 2026-2027

The Board approved the budget in August, so a review of the budget was provided.



The Board reviewed the FY 2026-2027 budget. At 17% into the fiscal year, the organization is also 17% spent against the budget, indicating that overall expenditures are tracking exactly as anticipated at this point in the year.

All municipal dues have been received, providing a strong start to the fiscal year on the revenue side. We have also made the decision to forgo holding the Prosperity in Practice event this year and instead work with Brightstocking to focus fundraising efforts around the Converge event in the new year.

The only noteworthy variance at this point is Legal and Professional Expenses, which are at approximately 50% of the annual budget. This higher level of spending is attributable to audit-related activities and associated charges that were incurred and recorded during the first quarter of the fiscal year. These expenses are therefore largely timing-related rather than indicative of an ongoing trend.

Overall, the budget is tracking well and remains on target for this point in the fiscal year, except for the expected first-quarter concentration of legal and professional expenses.

9. Update on Site & Job Fund

The Board received an update on the Site & Job Fund.

10. Update on Transportation Referendum

BCEDC staff provided an update on the transportation referendum and encouraged board members to visit the County's website to understand the referendum. Information can be found at <https://beaufortcountypenny.com/>.

11. Beaufort Memorial Hospital Projects Grant

The Board considered grant funding for the Beaufort Memorial Hospital projects. The Hilton Head project will provide emergency and urgent care services under one roof and is expected to open in early 2027. The May River project includes a new 5,000-square-foot primary care medical office designed to accommodate four to six primary care providers, with groundbreaking scheduled for late 2026/early 2027. Together, the projects represent \$29.85 million in total capital investment: \$25.5 million for Hilton Head and \$4.35 million for May River.

A motion was made by Tab Tabernik to approve grant funding of \$30,000 for the projects. The motion was seconded by Chris Forster. Motion passed unanimously. Since this is a non-profit organization, the grant must go before the County's Finance, Administration, and Economic Development Committee and then to full County Council for final approval.

12. BCEDC Staff Activity

The Board received an update on BCEDC staff activity.

- John O'Toole and Kelli Brunson attended the Southern Economic Development Council annual conference. John was elected to the SEDC Board as an alternate state delegate for SC. Kelli received a scholarship from SEDC to attend this conference.
- BCEDC staff presented a grant check to Sterling Helicopter (Project Helicopter). The company has moved into their office space at Buckwalter Place.
- BCEDC staff attended the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Reception.
- BCEDC staff filmed a segment with WHHI with guests, Megan Morris from the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce and Dr. Laurie Boeding from Technical College of the Lowcountry.
- John O'Toole presented at the Greater Bluffton Chamber's first annual State of Growth event.
- Kelli Brunson was selected for and participated in the first session of Santee Cooper's ENVOY program.



13. Executive Session - Personnel

At 3:05 p.m., a motion was made by Blakely Williams to enter executive session regarding personnel. The motion was seconded by Ethan Cox. Motion passed unanimously.

At 3:21 p.m., a motion was made by Blakely Williams to exit executive session. The motion was seconded by Tab Tabernik. Motion passed unanimously.

14. Action Regarding Staffing

John O'Toole resigned as Executive Director. BCEDC Board and staff thanks him for nine years of service as Executive Director.

15. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

16. New Business

There was no new business.

17. Adjournment

A motion was made by Chris Forster to adjourn the meeting at 3:34 p.m. The motion was seconded by Blakely Williams. Motion passed unanimously.