



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

*Thursday, August 13, 2026 | 2:00pm
The COVE, 97 Progressive Street, Suite 120, Bluffton*

Attendance:

BCEDC Board Members: Joel Braun, Chair; Ashley Feaster, Past Chair; Chris Forster, Blakely Williams, Brian Jackson, Ethan Cox, Andrea Sisino, Van Willis, Alice Howard, Lisa Sulka, Alan Perry, Karen Gilbert, Melissa Azallion Kenny, Mary Lee Carns

Invited Guests: Scott Marshall, Kay Maxwell, Paul Arvantides, Mike Alsko, Greg Shelton, Nicole Wood, Michelle Mealer

BCEDC Staff: John O'Toole, Kelli Brunson, Katie Ryan (Summer Intern)

Public: Elvio Tropeano, Nick Hammond

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation (BCEDC) Board of Directors was called to order at 2:00pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Appointment of BCEDC Board of Directors

The Board considered the appointment of Ethan Cox, First Citizens Bank; Brian Jackson, Regions Bank; and Lisa Sulka, William Raevis, each with a term ending June 2030. A motion was made by Ashley Feaster and seconded by Chris Forster. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Recognition of Past Board Members

The Board recognized outgoing members of the BCEDC Board of Directors for their service to the organization. Mike Alsko was a founding member of the BCEDC Board of Directors and served for 10 years. Greg Shelton served for five years and served on the executive committee as BCEDC's treasurer. Thank you to both for their continued support and wisdom.

5. Appointment of Executive Committee Officers

The Board considered the appointment of Blakely Williams, Dominion Energy, as Interim Treasurer and Andrea Sisino, USCB, as Secretary. A motion was made by Lisa Sulka and seconded by Ashley Feaster. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Executive Session

At 2:17 p.m., a motion was made by Blakely Williams and seconded by Lisa Sulka to enter executive session. Motion passed unanimously. At 2:39 p.m., a motion was made by Andrea Sisino and seconded by Lisa Sulka to exit executive session. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Introductions

Introductions were made.

8. Approval of Minutes – June 25, 2026

A motion was made by Andrea Sisino to approve the June 25, 2026, minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Blakely Williams. Motion passed. Lisa Sulka and Ethan Cox abstained.

9. Update on BCEDC Strategic Plan 2030

The Board received an overview of the strategic plan by intern, Katie Ryan. Ms. Ryan's summer task was to participate in a strategic planning class by the Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute and review BCEDC's plan and make recommendations. Her recommendation was to add language in the plan regarding Sergeant TAP – an app designed to translate military experience into civilian workforce.

10. Brightstocking Fundraising Proposal

The Board reviewed the Brightstocking fundraising proposal. A motion was made by Ashley Feaster to pursue a Request for Quotes (RFQ), with two quotes obtained as backup. The motion was seconded by Lisa Sulka. Motion passed unanimously.

11. Review of FY 2025–2026 Budget and Audit Update

The Board received an update on the FY 2025–2026 budget and audit.

12. FY 2026–2027 Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed FY 2026–2027 budget. A motion was made by Chris Forster to approve the budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Van Willis. Motion passed. Ethan Cox abstained.

13. FY 2027 Goals

The Board reviewed the FY 2027 goals. The measurements for capital investment(\$70M), leads (80), and Business Retention and Expansion (BRE-90) meetings. BCEDC is recommending a reduction in the job creation goal (200) to reflect current project trends, which show fewer positions per project but higher-quality jobs with stronger wage levels. In addition, many companies are improving productivity and operational efficiency by incorporating AI into their workflows, resulting in lower overall headcount needs. BCEDC staff will re-evaluate the goal at mid-year to determine whether it should be adjusted back to the previous year's goal of 250. Due to County Council's decision not to fund the BCEDC Site & Job Fund in FY27, BCEDC will limit product development efforts to sites currently owned by BCEDC, including Parker Drive and Lobeco.

14. Executive Board Report – BCEDC Board Inquiry into Blacquity Rent Payments

The Executive Board provided a report regarding the BCEDC Board inquiry into Blacquity rent payments. Chair Braun reported that they retained counsel, looked into the concerns that were raised and the record showed that the board was advised and consented to the rent payments. Furthermore, the spending fit within the budget and staffs permitted limits. A formal letter from the Board's Executive Committee will be issued to Beaufort County and the municipalities.

15. Project Cruise Grant

Project Cruise is a commercial tour boat manufacturer looking to purchase an existing 10,000 sq. ft. facility in the Beaufort's Commerce Park. The investment will be \$2,525,000, creating 15 new jobs to Beaufort County and retaining 4 jobs. A motion was made by Ashley Feaster to approve a \$10,000 grant for Project Cruise. The motion was seconded by Lisa Sulka. Motion passed unanimously.

16. Project Laundry – MasterCorp Grant Recommendation

The Board reviewed the revised grant recommendation for Project Laundry – MasterCorp. In 2023, the BCEDC Board of Directors approved a \$100,000 grant based on a projected \$35 million investment and 162 new jobs; however, the grant was not disbursed. After the project opened and an updated worksheet was received in July 2026, BCEDC revisited the grant recommendation. Based on a \$36 million investment and 87 jobs, staff recommended a reduced grant amount of \$75,000. BCEDC will prepare a performance agreement and receive annual reports from the company. A motion was made by Ashley Feaster to approve the reduced \$75,000 grant based on the increased investment and decreased job count. The motion was seconded by Andrea Sisino. Motion passed unanimously.

17. Project Bones Grant Closeout

The Board considered the closeout of Project Bones from its grant obligation. Based on the performance of the project as of June 30, 2026, Local Legends Brewing Company has exceeded the requirements established in the performance agreement. The project has reported approximately **\$4.152 million in investment** and **14 full-time jobs and 25 full-time equivalent positions**, with average annual compensation of **\$60,523**. A motion was made to approve issuance of a grant satisfaction letter following receipt and internal staff review of redacted payroll records to verify employment. Staff will also update the pro forma background language to reflect the appropriate past tense language. A motion was made by Lisa Sulka and seconded by Ashley Feaster. Motion passed unanimously.

18. Site & Job Fund

The Board reviewed the Site & Job Fund. A motion was made by Andrea Sisino to approve the Site & Job Fund as presented. The motion was seconded by Ashley Feaster. Motion passed. Ethan Cox abstained.

19. BCEDC MCIP, FILOT and SSRC Process Update

The Board received an update regarding the BCEDC MCIP, FILOT, and SSRC processes. BCEDC staff held a meeting with the Beaufort County School District to advise of the current process. Moving forward, BCEDC staff will add a step to the process which includes briefing the BCSD on the project and economic benefits the project would provide.

20. BCEDC Staff Activity Highlights

The Board received an update on BCEDC staff activity highlights as outlined in the written staff report.

21. SCA Update

SCA's update was provided to the board of directors in their packet and printed.

22. Public Comment

There was no public comment.



23. New Business

BCEDC staff will have a call on Monday morning early to discuss potential RAS facilities at the Lobeco property.

24. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Chris Forster to adjourn the meeting at 3:36 p.m. The motion was seconded by Andrea Sisino. Motion passed unanimously.