

Oconee County Economic Development Commission  
Minutes of Meeting  
November 18, 2011

The Oconee County Economic Development Commission met for their monthly meeting Friday, November 18, 2011 at the Commission office, 502 East Main Street, Walhalla, SC.

**Attendance**

**Commission Members:**

- √ Kim Alexander, District I
- √ Harold Gibson, District II
- √ Hank Field, District III
- √ Sammy Dickson, District IV
- √ Gene Blair, District V

**Ex-Officio Members:**

- √ Scott Moulder, County Administrator
- √ Ronnie L. Booth, President, Tri-County Technical College
- √ Michael Lucas, Superintendent, School District of Oconee County
- X Jeanne L. Ward, President/CEO Oconee Medical Center
- X Marvin Carmichael, Clemson University
- X Robert C. Winchester, General Superintendent, Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority
- √ Art Holbrooks, Planning Commission
- √ Jim Gadd, Executive Director, Oconee Alliance
- √ John Lummus, VP Economic Development, Tri-County Technical College

**EDC Staff:**

- √ Jim Alexander, Director
- √ Thelma Miller, Administrative Assistant
- √ Russell Johnson, Assistant

**Guests:**

Marvin Moss, Executive Director, Laurens Economic Development Corporation  
Paul Corbeil, County Council District I  
Archie Barron, County Council District III  
Reg Dexter, County Council District V  
Dave Eldridge, Economic Development Consultant  
W.C. Richards, Oconee County Resident

**News Media:**

LaDonna Beeker, The Journal  
Dick Mangrum, Radio WGOG  
Ray Chandler, Anderson Independent Mail

**Call to Order and Welcome:** Mr. Field, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He welcomed the Commission members and guests. He commented the room was filled to capacity and thanked everyone for their interest and support.

**Action to Approve the Agenda:** Mr. Gibson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Blair seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Minutes approved:** Mr. Dickson moved to approve the Minutes of the October, 2011 meeting; seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion carried.

**Guest Report:** Mr. Marvin Moss, Executive Director, Laurens County Development Corporation shared his experiences and practices in establishing the economic development program for Laurens County. Laurens County has four industrial parks, with three of them certified. His future plans include creating spec buildings that are ready for manufactures to locate businesses to in the county. He suggested that it is important in the current economy to prepare for the time when you are busy with clients. He explained to the Commission that if you build it or prepare it, they will come and they are always looking at you if you have product.

The marketing program for Laurens County uses the website as a major tool along with telephone calls to prospects. He mentioned that marketing is important to an area's economic development, noting the 'media' is his best friend. Magazine ads aimed at manufactures are effective and participating in trade shows are good ways to reach manufacturing firms. Also, holding press conferences are important in letting the community know that work is being done to help the area's economy.

Laurens County Development Corporation is funded by private sources, and its board members pay \$10,000 a year. Mr. Moss commented that it is vital to have an administrator and county council that are extremely pro-business.

**County Comments:** Mr. Scott Moulder, Administrator provided an update on new developments for the Golden Corner Commerce Park. A master plan will be undertaken to consider possibilities including a permanent location for the SC Foothills Heritage Fair and the possibility that Pioneer Rural Water District build a fresh-water processing plant on the site. A proposal from the Sewer Authority suggests finding the most feasible route from the Coneross plant to the GCCP whether it is Highway 11, Highway 182 or Highway 59.

The development of the Echo Hills industrial park is progressing with the approval of the resolution establishing covenants for the park. Waterlines are being installed by the City of Walhalla and road upgrades are being completed. Phase I will also include a site pad conducive to a better presentation of the property to clients.

The county broadband project is progressing with basic lines having been laid and fiber inserted. The project is meeting the timeline as outlined in the grant.

A number of applications for the EDC Directors position have been received. Additional recruitment efforts have also been initiated.

**South Carolina Economic Development Institute:** Mr. Archie Barron, County Council District III, earned The Institute Certification earlier in the month. The Institute is comprised of four two-day sessions. The curriculum is highly interactive and offers a great economic development learning experience. Session topics include: Leadership and Communication Skills, Community Development and Tourism, Business and Industrial Recruitment and Product Development. A highlight of The Institute for Mr. Barron was the opportunity to visit the four different locations where the sessions are held including: AT&T center, Columbia; Firehouse Conference Center, Newberry; Southeastern Institute for Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT), Florence and City of Greer Events Center. He commented, "The Institute is a worthwhile, "hands on" economic

development learning experience adding “being prepared and knowing the industrial family is critical as 60% - 80% of growth is through existing industry.

**Oconee Alliance:** Mr. Jim Gadd, Executive Director, Oconee Alliance, noted that at the recent meeting of the Southeastern Tourism Society in New Orleans the Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) received the 2011 Shining Example Award. Ken Sloan, CVB director accepted the award. This recognition was given in the category of CVB’s having budgets of up to \$2 million per year. The Mountain Lakes CVB started three years ago and has an annual budget of \$160,000 from local accommodations tax funds.

The Oconee Alliance will meet Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 a.m. at the Thrift Development Corporation office, Seneca. The Holiday meeting will include guests from the Children’s Trust of South Carolina, Walhalla High School Chorale and notables from happenings throughout the year.

**School District of Oconee County:** Dr. Michael Lucas, Superintendent, SDOC reviewed statistics from the 2011 EOC School Report Card. Absolute Performance and Improvement Ratings were rated Good meaning the District performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the South Carolina performance goal. Elementary, Middle and High Schools were rated as well as the District. Areas measured were: Per Student Expenditure, Student to Teacher Ratio, % of Student Attendance Rate, % of Teacher Attendance Rate, % of Teachers with Advanced Degrees, % of Prime Instructional Time, Average Teacher Salary, % Middle School Students in High School Credit Classes, Life Scholarship Eligible graduating seniors, Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate. The Graduation rate for students in Oconee County is 76.7%. Dr. Lucas emphasized that the goal is to raise that rate and the modified school calendar will help.

**Directors Report:** Mr. Jim Alexander, Director, reported on a myriad of activities that have taken place in the last month. He announced that Jim Gadd has been named Chairman of the Education Foundation of Oconee County. John Powell will serve as Vice President.

Mr. Alexander expressed pleasure in announcing a \$60 million investment by BASF. This represents the largest industrial investment in the history of Oconee County. BASF will create 25 jobs. He noted that previous capital investments and job created since 2007 was \$282.15 million and 1,105 jobs.

Covenants for the Echo Hills Park have been approved by County Council. Covenants for the Golden Corner Commerce Park have been drafted and are scheduled for Council on the December agenda. Work continues on the development of the Propex property agreements.

BorgWarner is celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the company in Oconee County. Mr. Alexander will be one of the speakers at the ceremony to be held later in the day.

Mr. Alexander provided a review of the Upstate SC Alliance Vision, Mission and Focus. The goal of the organization is to generate leads and prospects. 80% of the client requests include a building only 20% want just a site. Investor Relations show strong support with \$112,105 in new cash contributions, additional \$14,875 in sponsorships and \$25,000 in-kind support year to date. The Alliance has had a 95% retention rate. Industry targets include advanced materials and automotive area. Special initiatives to promote the Upstate include specific websites, advertising in specific industry publication and direct contacts through the company database, the call program and direct mail.

**Project and Marketing Report:** Mr. Russell Johnson, Marketing & Project Manager, reported on the recent South Carolina Department of Commerce Workshop. He and Mr. Alexander attended the gathering of economic development professionals from throughout the state. Topics included: Site selection; importance of covenants; development; incentives and new marketing efforts.

The Oconee County marketing plan has been expanded to include advertisements in the South Carolina Commerce Magazine and Business Facilities. The website will have new tools for research and site searches available soon. Mr. Johnson explained that hits on the website are tracked; recently viewers have been from China and India. The average time spent on a site is 12 minutes with areas of interest including buildings, incentives, taxes and quality of life.

**Old Business:** There was no old business.

**New Business:** Ms. Alexander made the motion that the December meeting be canceled, Motion seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion carried.

Mr. Field invited the Commission members and guests to mark their calendars and attend the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Hello, Economic Development Commission and Oconee Alliance Drop-in to be held Friday, December 2, 2011, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Adjourn:** Mr. Gibson moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Mr. Holbrooks. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thelma Miller  
Administrative Assistant