

Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
February 14, 2024

Present

Mike Dinnerman
Justin Smith
Steve Taylor
Jason Holt
Lawton Tinley

Absent

Mark Turner

Other

Kyle Cook
Christina Justice
Kathy A. Young
Melissa Dark

County Commission Chairman Steve Taylor made a motion to appoint Lawton Tinley as the acting chairman for the February 14th meeting of the FBHCDA. Mayor Jason Holt seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Chairman, Lawton Tinley called the February 14, 2024 meeting to order at 12:29 pm.

Minutes from the December 2023 meeting were reviewed. Jason Holt made a motion to approve. Steve Taylor seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Christina Justice presented the financials for December 2023. Steve Taylor made a motion to approve. Jason Holt seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Executive director, Jason Dunn gave the following report:

Product Development/Property Acquisition/Building and Land:

- Peachtree Business Park: We are currently in the final stages of design work.
- Workforce Development/College & Career Academy (FHSCCA): We are making significant strides in developing partnerships with key organizations such as the Georgia Forestry Association, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and ABAC. Our end goal is to establish a seamless pathway from FHSCCA to ABAC to employment in one of the 400+ forestry-related careers. We are also reintroducing an Industry Ready Class for FHSCCA seniors.
- FLEX: Finals are scheduled for March 22, with finalists being Events by Marijane, A+ Marketing, and Laila's Laceups.
- CDL Training Center: Expected to be operational by 2025.
- Wiregrass-Goodwill Construction Class: Classes are set to commence in June, aimed at providing candidates with basic construction skills applicable to the cargo trailer industry. Interviews, transportation, and employer visits will be facilitated.

Prospecting/Networking/Relationship Building/Recruitment:

- We continue to engage in prospecting, networking, and relationship building activities to foster growth and development in our community.

Retention/Recruitment & Existing Industry:

- High Country Cargo: Expressing interest in purchasing land for constructing three 10,000 SF buildings.
- NTI Limited: Plans underway for distributing axles for Lippert and building a 5,000 SF office/warehouse.

- Mana: Collaboration on a substantial solar project in progress, with involvement from ECG and Fitzgerald Utilities.
- Polar Beverages: Construction of a truck staging area to commence soon as weather permits, part of the Project Magnolia investment of \$60 million.
- Advanced Aluminum: Initiating discussions with contractors for a 70,000 SF building project.
- Allen Etheridge: Progress made towards a written agreement for building doors for Forest River.
- Eagle Railcar: Investing \$6 million to upgrade facilities, aiming to create 75 jobs over three years with an annual salary of \$65,000.

Entrepreneur/Small Business:

- Co-op/Innovation Kitchen – Cottage Innovations: Rebidding scheduled for this month.
- UGA Propel Program: Progress in entrepreneurship initiatives, including a positive response to the Farmer's Market survey.

Community Development/Regional Projects:

- Regional TSPLOST: Proposed allocation of funds for regional marketing, with further discussions ongoing.
- P25 Communications Project: Currently undergoing a communications study in Homeland Security Internal Review.
- Gateway Satellite Center: Collaboration with DMC and local law enforcement to establish a center, promising more resources for victims and increased efficiency for law enforcement.

Other Updates:

- Commercial/Retail Growth: Waffle House and Jet Foods developments underway, alongside plans for a boutique hotel.
- GEDA Board of Directors: Participation in the Professional Development Committee, focusing on rural development compensation metrics.
- CACGA: Significant involvement in advocacy centers statewide, with recent activities at the Capitol.
- EV Charging Stations: Exploring the feasibility of installation in the downtown area with support from a GEFA grant.
- Office Furniture: Allocation of funds (up to \$4000) for new chairs.

These updates represent our ongoing efforts towards community development, economic growth, and enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

Vice Chairman Mark Turner is officially stepping down from the board. The FBHDA appreciates his service to the board and to the community over the years. The City of Fitzgerald will be finding a candidate to fill his seat. The Board of Directors also needs to elect a chairman and vice chair. Director Jason Dunn asked the board to consider possibilities for these appointments.

Action Item:

Director Jason Dunn submitted the 2024-2025 Budget for the Board's approval. Jason Holt made a motion to approve. Steve Taylor seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Dark