

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

February 12, 2024

The Newberry County Council Economic Development Committee met on Monday, February 12, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a regular meeting.

Notice of the meeting was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT: Leslie "Les" Hipp, Committee Chair
Travis Reeder, Committee Member
Robert N. Shealy, Committee Member
Jeff Shacker, County Administrator
Rick Farmer, Economic Development Director
Eric Nieto, I.T. Director
Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council/PIO

1. Call to Order – Committee Member Les Hipp.

- At 6 p.m., Mr. Hipp called the meeting to order.

2. Election of Committee Chair for 2024.

- Mr. Shealy nominated Mr. Hipp to continue as Chair and Mr. Reeder provided the second.
- Mr. Reeder made a motion to close the nominations.
- Mr. Hipp thanked his fellow committee members and gave his appreciation of their confidence.
- Mr. Hipp said the motion was unanimous by acclamation.

3. Meeting Turned over to Newly Elected Chair.

- Mr. Hipp continued to lead the meeting as Chair.

4. Additions, Deletion, & Adoption of the Agenda.

- Mr. Reeder made a motion to accept the agenda as presented; Mr. Shealy provided the second and the motion was approved 3-0.

5. Public Comments.

- There were no public comments.
- Mr. Hipp recognized that the date was the NACCP anniversary date, Feb. 12, and he said he wanted to take a moment to recognize that.

6. Public Appearance.

a. Jason Guilietti, President, Central SC Alliance.

- As of September 2023, Mr. Guilietti is the new president and CEO of the Central S.C. Alliance.
- Mr. Guilietti has been in economic development for 20 years and has always worked in regional capacities. He has also worked for a major institution of higher education, being part of the first office of economic development at a public institution of higher education.
- Most recently, Mr. Guilietti came from Texas, originally he is from the Northeast, but came to Texas to lead a regional economic development organization, in between Austin and San Antonio, Texas. He said that is the fastest growing part of the country with a tremendous amount of growth happening. During his time leading the organization, they brought unprecedented results, closing billions of dollars of deals during his time. He said they did this through meaningful collaboration with their partners, understanding the needs of all of their communities and not just the major cities. He said that collaboration led to a lot of other results as well, having brought in tens of thousands of new jobs into the

community to keep up with the growth, but also to help manage the growth, help manage infrastructure, work with environmental groups to help manage projects, doing things together. They also worked with private sector partners, delivering expertise they didn't have.

- Mr. Guilietti said he led the organization through the pandemic and that was a fascinating experience for him, and they came through it better and stronger than everybody else, to the point where two years later they were recognized by their international trade organization as the best economic development organization in the entire country. He said that was a tremendous accolade to get and something he was super proud of over there.
- Mr. Guilietti said he inherited a new board chair who said they needed to slow down for a little while and to take a year or two off. He said that was not something he could do and provided Mr. Guilietti with the opportunity to see where he could have the most impact.
- Mr. Guilietti said the S.C. Central Alliance is an eight-county economic development organization, including the Capital City, Columbia. He said they are the largest alliance in the state and each county has different needs. He said they meet each county where they are, look at what each county is looking to attract and do in their community, and that is exactly what they deploy for their resources at the Alliance. They do that through collaboration and will be leveraging the private sector like they have before and are stewards of public resources, recognizing they get public funds and be just as mindful of that.
- Mr. Guilietti discussed the guiding principles he has been communicating with his board and partners, the first being authenticity, not pretending this area and part of the state and country is not what it is. He said when they tell people what is here, they will give it to them straight if there is a challenge there is a challenge, if there is an opportunity there is an opportunity.
- The second principle is accountability, Mr. Guilietti said he loves to be held accountable and for the organization to be held accountable because he knows they are going to do great work and deliver great work which means he wants their feet held to the fire when they are

- talking about what they are doing, and when they deliver the results, cheer with them and if they don't, tell them they need to do better.
- The third is transparency, Mr. Guilietti said in his past he has been successful being transparent and he likes to share everything he can. Knowing certain components must be held secret because of what they do but everything else can be shared and a lot of things can be told in what they are doing. He said when you take away that myth, people start to realize this is a competitive game, you need to be in it, and you are only successful when you are in the know of what's happening. That way when a new project happens, the residents understand the benefit and why it makes sense.
 - Mr. Guilietti shared three tenets and priorities that will be of utmost importance in 2024. The first being engagement, he feels the organization has lacked engaging partners, communities, working with the private sector and really creating a partnership. They will lean in building stronger relationships with all their communities. He added that they will do that in many different ways, one is lead generation to make sure Mr. Farmer has a pipeline of activity to bring before council for consideration and to help the existing companies as well and make sure their needs are met. They will work to create opportunities to partner on everything, they want to collaborate on small local town events or doing something massive because the county has a new initiative they want to achieve. They will also be calling investor meetings, as a member community of the alliance all council members are invited. It will last 45 minutes and give them a chance to see all the data, giving context to what they are doing.
 - The second tenet will be a team-centric approach, they will hold themselves to high standards and bring everyone to the table. He said they will create a culture of that collaboration and trust, from his team to their partners.
 - The last tenet is to tell the story, he said they are not telling the story of why this part of South Carolina is a great place to live, work, own a business, they are not telling the story. He said there are 3,600 people like Mr. Farmer and himself around the country, competing for 250 projects, and how do they differentiate themselves from the others, that

is to tell the story. He said they will launch a sophisticated earned media strategy, Mr. Guilietti said he is not a big fan of buying ads and putting them in the back of magazines, he said that is a waste of money. Developing stories and getting them placed in the Wall Street Journal, Forbes Magazine, in an airline lounge magazine.

- He said that all comes together with return on investment.
- Mr. Guilietti said they will be there as much as the county wants them to be and they want Mr. Farmer to feel empowered in everything he does, as well.
- Mr. Guilietti said they have doubled down on lead generation, traveling around the country and world, and council is invited as members to tell the story of Newberry. By doing so, this will generate a lot of leads and if they cannot come on a trip, Newberry County will get all the leads anyway and all the details. Central S.C. Alliance has hired consultants around the world to help open these doors to fit the industry segments that each of our counties wants to see in their region.
- Mr. Guilietti added that they will take those pipelines and do them in-house. He said right now, they are very reliant on the state and while they do great work, that means it goes to every county and community, and the way you control your own destiny and generate leads the more you are going to see success.
- The team at the Central S.C. Alliance is going to start officing out of their communities, Mr. Guilietti said starting soon Mr. Farmer will have a visitor once every couple of weeks from someone at Central S.C. Alliance, as a resource.
- Mr. Guilietti said he and his team want to be visible, not just from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but all the time. They want to be part of the community because when they are part of it they can tell the story far more impactful than they can hearing about it later.
- Mr. Reeder asked how much advertising they will be doing for Newberry County as far as here and around the country. Mr. Guilietti said they will highlight Newberry County quite a bit, they will be leaning on the county to find out what are the great things happening here, what businesses are doing great things, what is happening in the community so they can then match that up to a reporter and generate stories and get them put

out there in the statewide media, in the national media. He said they changed things internally and everything they do now, if they sponsor something and that sometimes comes with an ad, every single one has a map of every single one of their counties and they talk about themselves regionally.

- Mr. Shealy asked if they work with the South Carolina Power Team in Columbia. Mr. Guilietti answered in the affirmative and said they are key partners in everything they do.
- Mr. Hipp said he was glad to hear that Mr. Guilietti had already been to Newberry several times; he asked if he's been on a tour of Newberry County. Mr. Guilietti said not yet but has discussed it with Mr. Farmer. Mr. Hipp said he is a real proponent of eyes on. Mr. Farmer said they will make it a point.
- Mr. Hipp said in the past, they did not normally receive a lot of leads out of the Central S.C. Alliance and that he is hopeful that with Mr. Guilietti's energy and experience that he is bringing into this position and all he talked about tonight, Newberry County will see more leads out of the Alliance. Mr. Hipp said while Newberry County is not the major source of revenue but a significant contribution out of the county's budget and they want to make sure they are getting a return for that.
- Mr. Hipp said he'd like Mr. Guilietti to make a report to this committee once a quarter, if that is acceptable. Mr. Guilietti said he was happy to do it. Mr. Hipp said it could also be a designee, but he would like the Alliance to report once a quarter to tell them what they are doing for Newberry County. He added that he has no doubts they will be getting additional support. Mr. Guilietti said he wants to arm them with information to be able to give to anyone who asks why Newberry County supports the Alliance.
- Mr. Guilietti also mentioned they are starting up what they call familiarization tours where they bring in consultants, six to eight, best in the country, to tour this region for two and a half days. He said they will physically be here in some form or fashion. That will be happening in the fall.
- Mr. Hipp said they do think they have a very special place here and when they do have prospects come in they are on a very tight timeline, they fly

in they may go to the property itself and don't have an opportunity to see the community and really get the complete view of what Newberry County has to offer.

- Mr. Guilietti said they are hiring a public relations firm as well.

7. Staff Report:

a. Project Activity

- Mr. Farmer said project activity has remained steady and they've had four new projects since the committee last met.
- Mr. Farmer said last year was a good year, with three projects, two were expansions at Kraft and West Fraser and the other was the Duke Solar Farm project.
- This year, there were two project completions, both solar farms.
- There are two expansions being actively worked on and additional projects.

b. Product Development:

i. Mawsons Way Extension

- Mr. Farmer said they are continuing to move forward with the Mawsons Way Extension, and they had a conference call with the imminent domain attorney last week.

ii. Product Development Needs for 2024-25

- Mr. Farmer said there are three top priorities in his mind. The first is the extension of Commerce Park Avenue, he said they moved across the creek with this and the road ends after they cut the road short and the cannot reach the two most developable sites within the Mid-Carolina

Commerce Park and that is a need, and they don't know how they are going to move on that. The other is the extension of Prosperity Park Avenue in Mid-Carolina Commerce Park II, he said they must be able to get to a few sites in that park (that they cannot currently). Finally, a new sign for Mid-Carolina Commerce Park II is needed.

c. Other:

i. Korean American Day.

- Mr. Farmer said this was celebrated a few weeks ago and it was a great crowd of about 150 people. He said Samsung showed up and honored Korean War veterans and gifted them with new televisions.
- Mr. Shealy said he heard it was a great event.

ii. S.C. Auto Summit, Feb. 13-15.

- Mr. Farmer will be attending this summit in Greenville and will have the opportunity to meet site consultants, auto suppliers and learn about auto sector trends.
- Mr. Farmer said he is eager to hear what electric vehicles are really going to do over the next five years versus what they thought it was going to do.

iii. S.C. Power Team's Economic Development Review, March 13-15.

- Mr. Farmer said he will be attending next month. He said this is always a great conference.

8. Comments by and discussion items from the Committee Members

- Mr. Reeder said keep up the great work to Mr. Farmer.

9. Executive Session

§30-4-70 (a)(2) and (a)(5): Discussion of matters incident to proposed contractual arrangements, and related to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other business in the area served by the public body, including Projects Artemis, Cardinal, Roar, Opportunity, Phoenix, Night Train, Giga and other unnamed projects.

- Mr. Shealy made a motion to go into executive session; Mr. Reeder provided the second and the motion was approved 3-0 at 6:33 p.m.
- At 6:58 p.m., Mr. Shealy made a motion to come out of executive session; Mr. Reeder provided the second and the motion was approved 3-0.
- Mr. Hipp said there was no action taken in executive session.

10. Adjourn

- At 6:59 p.m., Mr. Shealy made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Reeder provided the second and the motion was approved at 3-0.

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**



Leslie Hipp, Committee Chairman



Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council

Minutes Approved: 2-21-2024