

# MINUTES – MEETING JANUARY 30, 2023

## BROOKS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Stephanie Williams presided over the meeting and called the meeting to order at 6:13 pm. Board members Erin McKenzie, Ulysses Marable, Derren Yearby, and Jack Harrell attended, along with Executive Director (E.D.) Stephanie Williams. The meeting was held at the Brooks County Commissioners Administration Building at 610 S. Highland Dr., Quitman, GA.

### **Organization of the Board**

Stephanie Williams took nominations for Chairman of the Board.

Erin McKenzie made a motion to appoint Derren Yearby as Chairman; no other nominations; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.

Derren Yearby made a motion to appoint Erin McKenzie as Vice Chairman; no other nominations; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.

Derren Yearby made a motion to appoint Jack Harrell as Treasurer; no other nominations; seconded by Erin McKenzie; unanimously approved.

Derren Yearby made a motion to appoint Ulysses Marable as Secretary; no other nominations; seconded by Erin McKenzie; unanimously approved.

### **Financials**

Chairman Derren Yearby moved to the acceptance of the financials for November and December 2022. After a thorough review of the financials. Erin McKenzie motioned to accept the financials as presented; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.

### **Old Business**

1. Ratification regarding Christmas bonuses, 2022

Votes were recorded as follows:

- Jack Harrell motioned to approve via hand-written signature 12/13/22
- Erin McKenzie motioned to approve via email 12/13/22
- John LaHood motioned to approve via email 12/14/22
- Derren Yearby motioned to approve via email 12/13/22
- No votes: Marie Horne, Ulysses Marable

Erin McKenzie made a motion to ratify the decision for the Christmas Bonuses given to Stephanie Williams and Jayme Coody equal to one week's pay; seconded by Ulysses Marable; unanimously approved.

2. Aviagen: After many discussions, a solution was presented to the Development Authority as well as the Tax Assessors to resolve the outstanding tax debt and lease agreement. Aviagen management admit that it is their fault and misunderstanding that the personal property should have been transferred in 2019, and amended thereafter, in order to receive the tax abatement for personal property but they had failed to do so in a timely manner, and according to Georgia law, they were legally responsible for the tax bill. Recent appeal to the Board of Equalization upheld that law as well. Rather than attempt to appeal the decision to a higher court and/or request refunds for the three years now paid on personal property, they formally request that the Development Authority please consider the following:

The request is to extend the tax abatement on **Personal Property alone** for three years in order to get the most of Aviagen's tax abatement. The tax abatement on real property would remain unchanged, and this would allow the company, which has invested so much into Brooks County by way of financial investment and job creation to take full advantage of the tax abatement afforded them in the initial contract, or as it was stated to E.D. Williams, to honor "the spirit of the agreement." E.D. Williams advised the Board that both the Chief Tax Assessor, Wayne Waldron, and our legal counsel, David Rose, had also been on the conference call with Williams and Aviagen management. Williams further advised the Board that the Tax Board had no issues with this agreement, and David Rose advised Williams that there is legal precedent to allow for such a decision. Erin McKenzie made a motion to amend the agreement to extend the tax abatement for three years on personal property alone in order for Aviagen to take full advantage of the agreement; seconded by Jack Harrell.

### **Executive Session**

Erin McKenzie made a motion to move to Executive Session; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.

### **New Business**

1. 2022 Proposed Budget: Motion made to Table the 2022 Budget until February meeting made by Erin McKenzie; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.
2. Community Heart and Soul: E.D. Williams spoke briefly about Community Heart and Soul, as only one Board member was unaware of the program. Williams stated the City of Morven had already passed a motion to commit to support the Development Authority's endeavors through representation, coordination and cooperation as we continue to lay the ground work for the seed grant. Williams also explained that should Brooks County be chosen as a Heart and Soul Community, the Development Authority would be required to match the grant funds in the amount of \$10,000 for Community Development projects. Jenny Robbins, with Georgia EMC, would serve as our Project Planner, free of charge, and Stephanie Williams and Jayme Coody would serve Brooks County as Project Co-coordinators for Community Heart and Soul under the guidance of Jenny Robbins. Erin McKenzie made a motion to support our endeavors with the Community Heart and Soul Project; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.
3. Our Board meeting dates/times: The Board agreed that we can change the future dates and times of the Development Authority meetings. Originally, it was set to be the third Thursdays at 6 pm; however, due to a conflict with the new meeting dates of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Development Authority Board will meet on the fourth Thursdays at 6pm at 610 S. Highland Drive in Quitman, GA.

### **Reports**

#### Executive Director

- Rayonier:
  - Received the check to close the transfer of the property. Williams needs the Chairman to assist with the completion of the closing documents.
- The Industrial Park mowing contract: Planning to put the advertisement out in the next few weeks.
- Historical Preservation Board: They have not provided the Authority with proof and will refund the money to the EDA. Williams spoke to Commissioner Maxwell who stated that they would refund us the money, as they had not raised any other funds.
- Morven Solar LLC:

- Williams has not received a final application for IRB- only “drafts.” Williams stated serious concerns with the “drafts” as well as numerous conflicts of the proposed sites and the Brooks County Comprehensive Plan, which is filed with the Department of Community Affairs. Williams also reported that Morven City adopted a Solar Moratorium at their most recent City Council meeting, and they are working on drafting a solar ordinance for the City.

No other reports. Ulysses Marable made a motion to Adjourn; seconded by Erin McKenzie; unanimously approved.