

MEETING MINUTES – FEB 27, 2023

BROOKS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Special Called Meeting

Stephanie Williams presided over the meeting and called the meeting to order at 6:14 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.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Yearby moved to the approval of the minutes. After a careful and thorough review, Erin McKenzie motioned to accept the minutes for the Special Called Meeting held November 17, 2022, Special Called Meeting held January 30, 2023 and Executive Session held January 30, 2023 ; seconded by Ulysses Marable; unanimously approved.

Appearances

Chairman Yearby moved to Appearances, wherein Steve Heddson with Fusion Creative Marketing presented the Feasibility Report on Tourism and Economic Development. (See Study.) Heddson suggested that if Phase II were to be approved, then he would need approximately 4 to 5 hours for a Brand and Marketing Workshop with approximately a dozen or so interested parties, including the Authority. After the presentation, there were no questions. The Board will study the report further.

Financials

Chairman Derren Yearby moved to the acceptance of the financials for January 2023. After a thorough review of the financials. Erin McKenzie motioned to accept the financials as presented; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.

Old Business

NONE

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 approve the 2022 Budget with the 3% COLA adjustment to administrative staff, budgeting for Phase II pending further discussion, and appropriating funds to match the seed grant for Community Heart and Soul; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.
2. Project Foxhole
 - a. \$2.5M cap investment, min 30 jobs with a 10-year tax abatement.
 - b. The project hinges on the demand for workforce housing
 - c. The project also is interlinked with two other major industries, thus propelling the demand to meet the need for workforce housing into motion
3. Workforce Housing:
 - a. The Executive Director, Stephanie Williams presented the following to the Board of Commissioner on Thursday, January 23rd at their Regular Workshop Meeting.

“Proposal for acquisition of 50 acres of surplus land currently held for industrial development

The Brooks County Development Authority (BCDA) is interested in purchasing 50 acres of Industrial land (parcel no. 095 00041) currently owned by the Brooks County Board of Commissioners (BOC), which has been held for industrial development since 2007. Records show that at least one proposal was submitted to the BOC several years ago for an industrial prospect. The BOC approved the acquisition, pending development, but the project fell through and the land was reverted back to the BOC.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, industry and business have shifted, and so too, have the needs of those industries we look to serve and welcome into our community.

Housing, especially affordable housing, is sorely missing across the Southern region of the United States, and as communities are working to address this problem, it is spurring economic growth within those communities.

Over the course of the last decade numerous academic studies show that tens of millions of people have migrated from urban to rural areas. This has been largely driven by natural disasters, pandemics and political climate.

Since 2021 (post-COVID), the number of inquiries or potential prospects the BCDA has received has been in the dozens. However, for one reason or another, Brooks County could not meet the immediate demand(s) of that industry, and since the demand(s) could not be immediately met, they simply moved along to the next community.

The most common demand remains to be housing. The second demand is warehouse space.

The BCDA is working to address both these demands, but the primary target at this time is housing.

The BCDA currently has a prospect with which we have negotiated (Project Foxhole) that is looking at two communities other than Brooks County. Project Foxhole is an important prospect. The initial capital investment is \$2.5M, and they will be relocating their entire trained workforce of 30 workers and their families with them. That's 30 families to live, work, play and pay taxes in Brooks County. We also know they are also looking to grow and expand their business once established.

Additionally, this particular prospect brings with it the potential of two other associated industries looking to piggy-back the first, bringing more capital investment and more families.

Project Foxhole hinges on one demand we have promised to address in order to get them to build in Brooks County- workforce housing. We have a verbal agreement that should we meet this demand, Brooks will be their new home. This is significant, as this is the first prospect willing to work with us to meet this need rather than simply moving on to the next community.

The BCDA is needs to begin development of workforce housing as soon as possible, and we need your help to make it happen.

We understand that the land is currently zoned Heavy Industrial, and we are looking to only have a small portion rezoned Multi-Family Housing. This is not uncommon in many communities, and we would be happy to provide examples, should the BOC request some.

We understand that the acreage is currently assessed at nearly \$5000/acre, and we are willing to negotiate a fair and reasonable price to make this happen. We humbly ask for your help in this matter."

The Board of Commissioners tabled the request until their March 6th meeting.

4. IP Mowing: E.D. Williams requested clarification for the Mowing Contract requirements as to whether they should include all the right of ways and ditches or should be delineated. Upon further clarification, Williams stated that she will have the advertisement and paperwork ready for review and submittal by the end of next week.
5. IP Lease of Acreage: The BCDA has an interested party who would like to lease a small parcel of land for storage of industrial equipment as they rebuild the infrastructure in the City of Quitman. The parcel is at the corner of Prospect and Venture. Williams offered the parcel, with the Chairman's permission, to lease at a rate of \$2000 per month. The expected lease would be through December 2023. The lease would have a provision in it to cover cost of any damages to the land, if any. Consideration of this lease agreement is that the company is not from Brooks County, and employees dine and shop locally throughout the project, generating revenue for the city and county.

Reports

Stephanie Williams, Executive Director

1. Community Heart & Soul: Announcement to begin application for Seed Grant this week.
2. ECHOES program: Williams is working with the BOE to address needs of parents and middle school/high school children as it pertains to economic development, community development and leadership skills
3. Workforce Development Study: Williams announced that she has begun a WD study, which will utilize particular underutilized skill sets while addressing the needs of both our residents and the industries within our borders
4. Quarterly Community ED Summit: March 3, 2023 (9am-12pm) at the Board of Education

Jayme Coody, Small Business Development

1. Jayme announced a small business prospect she is currently working with as well as a possible prospect looking to relocate to Brooks County.
2. Jayme also announced that she will be meeting with Alison Widor, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, in the next couple weeks to collaborate.

With no other reports, Erin McKenzie motioned to adjourn; seconded by Jack Harrell; unanimously approved.