

# BEAUFORT COUNTY

---

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

---



### BEAUFORT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

#### Board Meeting Minutes

#### January 25, 2023

**Present:** Chairman Ed Booth, Bubs Carson, Commissioner Rebholz, Andrew Fisher, Dr. David Loope, Don Sadler

**Absent:** Archie Griffin, Dylan Bowen, Al Powell, Chad Keech, Mia Williams, Clif Williams, Ricky Credle

**Other Attendees:** Brad Hufford, Callie Northern-Herring, Sarah Bernart, Brian Alligood, Susan Squires, Zachary Allen, Al Klemm

**Welcome:** Chairman Ed Booth

**Introductions:** Current Members

**Minutes:** Chairman Booth advised without a quorum; approval of the minutes will be postponed until the next Advisory Board Meeting.

**BCED Update Brad Hufford:** Happy to be back in person. Those who haven't met me, I am Brad Hufford the new Economic Development Director, I've been on the job about 9 months and now getting my feet under me and hitting my stride. Thank you for allowing me to get up to speed before we restarted these meetings. A little background for those who aren't familiar with me, I am from Eastern North Carolina. My folks were from Pitt County, as my father was in the Army, we moved away but I returned to go to East Carolina University and earned my bachelor's degree in history and political science. I got my master's degree from ECU in public administration with a focus on Economic Development. I went to work for a regional nonprofit focusing on Eastern North Carolina renewal. After that I came to work in Washington with the Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance, more specifically our program was 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communities. We assisted counties throughout the region with Strategic Planning in Economic Development. I worked for the Town of Ayden as their Planner and Economic Developer, then in Pitt County Economic Development Commission. I left to go to Carolinas Gateways Partnership in Rocky Mount briefly, back to Greenville to the Greenville ENC Alliance and now here in Beaufort County. I am very excited to be the Economic Development Director and put all that experience and knowledge to good use here in Beaufort County. I

have found that we have a lot of good allies and community support. I have been getting out there meeting people, building our network, and finding out who's who and who are our partners. Taking stock, I am a County Employee, I work for Mr. Alligood and the County Commissioners, our funding comes from the County and so I am really focused on fulfilling the goals of what the County wants in Economic Development. We work hand in hand with all the local partners, the municipalities, Committee 100, the school system, the Community College, ECU, and the Chamber of Commerce. I am in the Chamber's Leadership Beaufort Program, Sue completed it last year, for me it's been great because it has allowed me to learn more about Beaufort County, expand my network and it already is paying dividends.

Economic Development is a relationship business and knowing who to call and how to get answers and get things done. They say in Economic Development, we as professionals have to have a very wide knowledge base but not very deep so having that network is very important. Business retention and expansion is huge for us, the stats will bear this out, 75 to 80% of the new jobs created in any community are from companies who are already here. It just makes sense to help them along the way, make sure they are stable, growing, not laying off and you do that by visiting with them and learning about their companies. We're having a concerted effort to get out to all our industries, it's a bit of a slow process because everyone is busy. We like to make those visits with the plant manager and sometimes HR. Workforce is such a major issue for companies, so we include a workforce development team, and we invite our County Commissioners to join us on those site visits. We are looking to create an annual, perhaps twice a year, resource, and job fair to bring companies, job seekers, and resources such as the Community College and NC Works together.

New Industry Recruitment gets most of the attention in Economic Development. We would love to have ground breakings, ribbon cuttings and new announcements all the time but just the nature of the business those things take some time, and you need to be the right fit. You're competing against not just your neighbors in Eastern North Carolina but also communities all across America and worldwide. We certainly advocate for Beaufort County, we respond regularly to RFIs from companies, developers, and the state. We want a company that will be the right fit and play to our assets.

You cannot attract companies to a community without product, when I say product, I mean sites and buildings. We currently have sites at the Washington Beaufort County Industrial Park, the Chocowinity Industrial Park, and working to develop the Aurora Industrial Park which will house a satellite campus for Beaufort County Community College. Our office is working with the Washington Warren Airport to develop their industrial park as part of their current airport expansion. We market our products through our web site, social media, the EDPNC and flyers. We do a little bit with small business, retail, and entrepreneurship, but our main focus is industrial and big scale projects. We partner with the Community College Small Business Center, ECU Small Business Technology Development Center, and other resources to help with retail, entrepreneurship, and small business. We are now discussing the topic of housing. I am part of a new housing task force, and we hope to address this crucial issue for Beaufort County.

In August we had the opportunity to host the EDPNC NC100 at the Community College. In November we participated in a mock site visit and training workshop sponsored by ElectriCities with the Transatlantic Business & Investment Council and Navigator Consulting. As a result, we were certified as a Foreign Direct Investment Community. We have applied for and made the first round for a grant with the North Carolina Railroad Company to help us with the rail line on the Chocowinity Industrial Park, NCRR came out for a site visit just last week. We are very lucky to have Zach from Lead for America with us for a year, he's a recent ECU grad and he's helping us out and gaining some economic development experience. We have also been accepted for a SECU Economic Development Intern through ECU for the summer. I have been asked to be on the EDPNC Advisory Board representing the Northeast prosperity zone. The Greenville ENC Alliance received some grant funding to create a regional marketing website Grow ENC and we are included in that effort.

We are working on several projects and hope to make public announcements soon. Every client we meet we tailor a presentation for them to introduce them to Beaufort County, with an example displayed for you on the screen.

I did want to touch on the strategic planning of this board. We have an opportunity to redo how this advisory committee operates. In the past we met monthly, we have discussed changing the frequency to quarterly. I wanted to put that out there as an item of business to this group. I also wanted to talk about the meetings, what content you would like to cover, who should be here, perhaps there are people who aren't here who should be here.

Mr. Klemm asked to speak, and Commissioner Booth welcomed his questions and comments but directed him to email Brad outside this advisory board meeting to enable the board members to complete their business.

Commissioner Rebholz asked if there was a charter, Mr. Alligood advised there are bylaws but no charter. Dr. Loope stated the importance of the advisory board meetings for him to meet the needs of industry, workforce, and the community. Mayor Sadler asked about action items. Mr. Alligood advised what they were looking for was a recommendation of the advisory board regarding projects to take to the board of commissioners. The input of the advisory board would add credence to those projects presented to the commissioners. Commissioner Booth stressed the importance of in-person meetings and did not wish to return to Zoom meetings. Bubs Carson agreed and said our town will support in person meetings whether monthly or quarterly. Mr. Alligood recommended we can "take this show on the road" and move the meetings to different locations throughout the county. At the request of Commissioner Rebholz there was discussion and agreement to red line the bylaws and redefine the purpose of the Advisory Board.

**Motion to Adjourn: John Rebholz**

**Second: Ed Booth**

