

Board Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2026
20 Doyle Street, Toccoa, GA

Attending: Brian Akin, Evan Hellenga, Rick Phillips (via phone), Chris Rickman, Fredda Wheeler, Christian Hamilton, Chad Dorsett, Abby Watson, Kevin McCraney, Julie Paysen, Tessa Reavis, Ann Marie Knight, Joley Strickland, Janney Sanders, Brittany Ivey, & Sadie Hawkins

Chairman Brian Akin called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Sanders opened with prayer. Akin led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the confidentiality & conflict of interest statement.

A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented, [Hellenga:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to approve the March 18, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes, [Rickman:Hellenga]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to approve the February financials as presented, [Hellenga:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

Program Updates/Reports:

Attraction: Ivey reported two new projects, including a state project interested in 546 Old Liberty Hill Road. Zoning information was provided for the Sage building. Project MAX extended their due diligence by 60 days as allowed in the PSA. Project Next continues site work with no updates. Project Seven is awaiting a land survey to finalize the PSA. Existing: SCDA assisted with ASI's Continuous Improvement Contest and is partnering to expand it to county-wide event during Manufacturing Week. Ivey met with Patterson Pump regarding the inland port and their utilization.

Product Development: The Freeman Creek Lift Station generator has been delivered and installed. Heritage Rise Apartments received its first Certificate of Occupancy. Hamilton, Wheeler, and Ivey met with Senator Warnock's regional aide.

President's Report:

Existing Industry: Ivey shared that a tour of the Gainesville Inland Port is scheduled for April 28 with multiple existing industries planning to participate. SCDA continues supporting childcare needs by supplying our local employers with resource information.

Workforce Development: Ivey reported that she met with the new NGTC campus director. Stephens County leads Manufacturing Challenge participation again this year. Akin and Hawkins reported on their Essentials Training. SCDA recognized WBL Student of the Month Tate Bartmas. The Advancement Academy Speaker for March was Nathan Martin with Fieldale.

Recruit New Industry: Ivey said that there are 25 RSVPs for the Women in ED Tour, planned in partnership with Habersham and Franklin counties. Ivey will attend the GEDA conference, and Hawkins will attend GPC's Project Manager 101 training.

Input from Others: Hamilton reported the county received its highest bond rating, issued bonds, and is updating land use ordinances. Wheeler reported the water warehouse fire did not impact water quality. Hellenga noted upcoming City water planning meetings. Paysen introduced Tessa Reavis as Chamber President-Elect and shared the dates for the Post-Legislative Coffee with Senator Bo Hatchett and Representative Chris Erwin, a town hall meeting, and the Chamber Golf Tournament. Watson reported a CTAE/WBL walkthrough at Stephens County High School. Knight shared about Stephens County Hospital tax credits and through the Georgia HEART Program. Strickland reported Orthopedics staffing additions and OR renovations are at 75%. McCraney discussed data centers and noted Georgia Power operates under PSC rules for large-load projects. Dorsett reported WNEG Radio will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a plaque dedication at 26 East Savannah Street.

Executive Session: A motion was made to enter Executive Session for the discussion of real estate matters as provided by O.C.G.A 50-14-3(4) at 8:19 a.m., [Hellenga:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to exit Executive Session at 8:37 a.m., [Hellenga:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 a.m., [Hellenga:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

Submitted By:

Attested By:

Brian Akin, Chairman

Brittany W. Ivey, President/CEO