

Board Meeting Minutes
May 20, 2026
20 Doyle Street, Toccoa, GA

Attending: Brian Akin, Evan Hellenga, Rick Phillips, Chris Rickman, Cassandra Wilkins, Fredda Wheeler, Christian Hamilton, Chad Dorsett, Abby Watson, Julie Paysen, Tessa Reavis, Janney Sanders, Brittany Ivey, & Sadie Hawkins

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

Phillips 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, [Phillips:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to approve the April 15, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes, [Rickman:Phillips]. All in favor; none opposed.

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

Board Action Items:

A motion was made to authorize the Chairman to sign an amendment to the North Pond Street PSA that would allow the developer to close prior to finalizing the hotel brand agreement but allow the SCDA to buyback the property if the brand agreement is not received, [Rickman:Wilkins]. All in favor; none opposed.

Program Updates/Reports:

Attraction: Ivey shared that Project Friend is projected to close on May 26. Project Defense continues moving forward with office plans submitted. Project Diamond Cable is looking for existing buildings that have 8-inch concrete floors. Project Osiris is a new project considering Lot 10. Project Venture 2.0 preliminary development activity has begun.

Existing: Sark Wire is preparing for another expansion. SKAPS has filled its open positions with plans to incorporate WBL students next year. Havenbloom expects all 32 units to be occupied by June 1 and is discussing future expansion. Heritage Rise Apartments has COs on two buildings and is about half leased. Skyline Development housing discussions continue.

Product Development: The Freeman Creek Lift Station project is nearing completion. Ivey reported the project may exceed budget slightly due to taxes omitted from original pump quotes. Landscaping concerns at the Hammerstone Drive entrance were discussed, with consensus to leave the cherry trees in place and revisit with a plan if the shade kills the grass.

President's Report:

Existing Industry: Ivey shared that the Gainesville Inland Port tour was beneficial, with several local industries now exploring future import and export opportunities through the port. SCDA is planning a countywide Continuous Improvement Contest that will be held during National Manufacturing Week.

Workforce Development: The Manufacturing Challenge will be made up of 8 Stephens County recently graduated Seniors. Amelia Holbrook was recognized as WBL Student of the Year and awarded a scholarship. SCDA completed the last round of 8th grade industry tours and is partnering with the JDA and Goodwill of Northeast Georgia to host a regional job fair in Lavonia.

Recruit New Industry: Ivey reported that 24 women participated in the Northeast Georgia Women in Economic Development Tour. Ivey attended the GEDA Conference, and Hawkins attended GA Power's PM 101 training and an AI course at NGTC.

Input from Others: Hamilton reported that Stephens County is in budget season. Wheeler reported the city approved its budget without a millage increase. Hellenga discussed ongoing water infrastructure needs. Paysen shared that Farmhouse Coffee plans to begin work on its Toccoa location soon. Reavis reported on the Chamber Golf Tournament and upcoming networking luncheon. Watson reported that J Davis continues gaining traction across Georgia.

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 8:17 a.m., [Phillips:Wilkins]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to exit Executive Session at 8:33 a.m., [Phillips:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 a.m., [Phillips:Rickman]. All in favor; none opposed.

Submitted By:

Attested By:

Brian Akin, Chairman

Brittany W. Ivey, President/CEO