

MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
430 HELIX ROAD
GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
AUGUST 25, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Frank Daniel, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Tiffani Ireland, Shirley Jenkins, Charles Jennings, Wes McAllister, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, David Sawyer, Ernie Segars, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas, and Anita Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Matthew Brownlee, Jeffrey Carroll, Jim Coleman, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charlie Henry, Justin Lane, Theo Lane, Sen. Shane Massey, Miliken Matthews, Brandon Smith, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Rick Green, Kal Kunkel, David Hays.

GUESTS PRESENT: William Floyd, Executive Director/Chief of Staff, S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW); Amadeo Geere, Director of Workforce Services, SC DEW; Roy Lowe, SC DEW Regional Manager; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; Susan Jackson, Outreach Director, Congresswoman Sheri Biggs' Office; Ryan Syrbe, Field Representative, Senator Tim Scott's Office.

Call to Order	The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via Zoom. Frank Daniel gave the invocation and Chairman Charles Jennings called the meeting to order. The minutes from the June 23, 2025, meeting were approved unanimously.
Guest Presentation: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce	<p>S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce Executive Director/Chief of Staff William Floyd gave overview of the department's current initiatives and statewide workforce development statistics.</p> <p>Floyd said DEW staff are all over the state including the county SC Works Centers, saying their job is to connect job seekers with employers. He said employment numbers are better in South Carolina than in most states, with more people working in SC than ever before with nearly 2.5 million employed. But he said there are 70,000 jobs currently listed on the job connection platform SC Works Online Services (SCWOS) that need to be filled. He said DEW is continuously working with education partners to get people trained for available jobs. He said the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown more than any other state.</p> <p>Floyd said South Carolina's unemployment rate is 4.2 percent, which is considered full employment (anything under 5 percent). He said the state is saturated with job openings and anticipates continuous hiring needs.</p> <p>He said the state not only has brick and mortar SC Works offices, but is using pop-up SC Works Centers (trucks) where job seekers can receive resume and job search assistance. The pop-up centers have gone to places like Dollar General parking lots, for example. "We go where the people go," Floyd said. Virtual engagement centers are also available to help job seekers connect with employers from their home computers or cell phones, including the ability to connect into virtual job fairs. DEW has also used virtual</p>

	<p>engagement for second chance hiring of incarcerated individuals who are within six weeks or so from leaving prison.</p> <p>Floyd said DEW has programs for veterans and their spouses, saying employers like to hire veterans because they have been through “the blocking and tackling of life.” The state has recently launched the S.T.A.Y.S. (Stay to Apply Your Skills in South Carolina) Program, encouraging veterans who have been stationed in South Carolina and their spouses to find work and stay in the state. So far, there have been 527 veterans and 33 spouses in the program, 329 employers, 11 job seekers have entered training, and there have been 194 hires.</p> <p>He said September is South Carolina Workforce Development Month with a proclamation to be declared by Gov. McMaster. DEW will celebrate workforce excellence and ingenuity by presenting the S.C. Workforce Champion Award. Last year’s recipient was BMW, honored for engaging in SC’s schools to ensure a workforce pipeline into the future. Floyd said there were 102 job recruitment events held during last year’s workforce development month across the state, with 4,712 job seekers and 648 employers attending, and 1,881 potential hires.</p> <p>Board member Anita Williams commented that some job seekers do not know how to present themselves for potential new employment. Floyd said DEW and workforce development partners work hard on helping prepare job seekers for interviews including mock interviews for people who are incarcerated and young people who have not been in the workforce. Upper Savannah Workforce Development Director Kal Kunkel said workshops are held in the Upper Savannah Region for dressing for success and mock interviews. He said staff will be going into school classrooms preparing high school seniors by assisting with their resumes and holding mock interviews.</p>
Upper Savannah Workforce Program: Job Fairs	<p>Workforce Development Director Kal Kunkel gave an overview of job fairs in the Region, performance measures from Program Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025), and new initiatives.</p> <p>Kunkel said connection points have been set up at USC Laurens and at the Clinton United Way where computers are available for job seekers. In the past year, connection points have been set up at Newberry College, Town of Edgefield, and Macedonia Baptist Church in North Augusta. He said a virtual engagement center is available where job seekers can go online and look for jobs and also connect with staff at the Greenwood or Newberry SC Works offices if they need further assistance.</p> <p>Kunkel announced PY 2025 numbers, saying there were 15,375 visits to SC Works Centers across the Region over those 12 months and 3,790 individual job seekers. He said staff provided 6,827 job seeker services and 1,875 employer services. Also during the program year, 3,412 job seekers and 339 employers attended in-person or virtual hiring events.</p> <p>Kunkel said 341 job seekers and 71 employers attended the Upper Savannah Regional Job Fair held last week at Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood.</p> <p>He said staff conducted 22 rapid response meetings last year at companies where they assisted soon to be dislocated workers with resumes, job searches, etc. The meetings</p>

	<p>were at six companies and 499 people lost their jobs. Kunkel said 82 percent of the 499 found new employment, including several Ascend employees who were hired by ES Foundry.</p> <p>Other recent job fairs include ZF Transmissions, a career fair for Greenwood and Laurens school districts for bus drivers, food service workers and custodians; a career fair in McCormick attended by 15 employers; and ES Foundry which had 36 open positions attended by 258 job seekers. Job fairs scheduled for the next couple weeks include a Department of Corrections hiring event in Saluda County, and SwipeJobs hiring events in Greenwood and Laurens counties for temporary and seasonal Fuji jobs.</p>
5310 Rural Transit Applications	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green updated the Board on 5310 transit applications and SCDOT intersection projects.</p> <p>First, Green announced that the consultants from Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute, who are creating a public transit feasibility study for Abbeville, Laurens and Saluda counties, have asked for more time beyond the original September 2025 deadline. Green said he could be reporting back to the Board about the study in February 2026.</p> <p>Green said SCDOT has asked for additional intersection projects to be included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Green said the projects to be added are two intersections in both Laurens and Saluda counties. However, the current intersections in the Plan are still in engineering phases. They are Short Cut Road and Highway 25 in Edgefield County, Highways 101 and 14 in downtown Gray Court in Laurens County, and Sweetwater Road and Bypass 25 SE in Greenwood County.</p> <p>Green presented the SCDOT Public Transit Application Rankings to the Board. Transit providers annually apply for van replacement funds and Upper Savannah staff ranks their requests. Green said McCormick Senior Center, Piedmont Agency on Aging, Burton Center and Laurens County Disabilities and Special Needs Board applied for the vans. Staff have reviewed, evaluated and prioritized the applications as required by SCDOT. McCormick was ranked first since it provides transit for the public and serves a secondary county (Greenwood) for McCormick Area Transit (MAT Trans). Piedmont Agency on Aging was ranked second and Burton Center third. Laurens DSNB was ranked fourth because its application was late, was revised after being submitted, and involves a request to replace a van with only 78,000 miles. The public transit application rankings were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Anita Williams said the intersection of Bell Street and Carolina Avenue and adjacent Main Street with a railroad track crossing in the City of Clinton have safety issues with several accidents. Green suggested she contact District 2 Administrator Kevin McLaughlin about the issues. Ernie Segars asked for an update on the Highways 101 and 14 intersection. Green said right of way acquisition is scheduled for FY 2026 and construction in FY '27.</p> <p>Green said he does not understand why SCDOT is requesting that more intersections be included in the long-range plan when current intersection projects are not far enough along. Matthew Miller expressed concern about the lack of progress in the Sweetwater Road and Bypass 25 SE intersection project in Greenwood County when new housing</p>

	<p>developments are being constructed in that area. Tiffani Ireland expressed frustration toward SCDOT about the lack of progress on the Short Cut Road and Highway 25 project in Edgefield County. Discussion continued about transportation projects and Green suggested having SCDOT come to the October Board meeting.</p>
Board Member Updates	<p>The floor was opened to Board members to report on items of interest from their communities.</p> <p>Tiffani Ireland praised the growth of the Edgefield County Recreation Department, announcing that nine summer camps were held this year as opposed to three in 2024. The County-owned park adjacent to the rec center is also being expanded, she said. Soccer, football and cheerleading are among the sports included. A total of 180 children are registered in programs not including football and cheerleading.</p> <p>Ernie Segars said an SC 250 Committee meeting was held in Laurens County last week that included members from Abbeville, Greenwood, Pickens, Oconee and Spartanburg counties. He said Carolina Day will be a major Revolutionary War 250-year commemoration celebration on June 28, 2026, including the debut of a \$100,000 state funded exhibit at the Laurens County Museum.</p> <p>Anita Williams said the City of Clinton has approved development of a travel youth baseball complex and residential subdivision, leading to the possibility of restaurants and hotels. City Council approved the sale of 552 acres of what used to be Whitten Center land. Williams expressed concern that the project might not be as successful as hoped. She said the Clinton Police Department will have a “Night Out” on Thursday where law enforcement and residents can meet.</p> <p>Faye Wright said the City of Abbeville’s Chestnut Street Park will be upgraded with additional playground equipment for children 12 and under and a pavilion. The Community Development Block Grant project contract will be signed on Tuesday, she said.</p> <p>Charles Goodwin said Abbeville County Council voted to transfer ownership of the Pete Smith recreation complex from Abbeville County to the City of Abbeville. The City was already running the complex and had the employees and coaches in place, he said.</p> <p>Shirley Jenkins and Williams said children in Clinton are enjoying a new splash pad. Joanna and Laurens also have splash pads. Williams said Joanna’s splash pad is very impressive.</p> <p>Marian Miller said the City of Laurens is growing with music every Friday and has the Squealing on the Square festival coming up. She said there are three housing developments on the way, two are in the City and one in Laurens County. The Ridge at Laurens recreation department is also growing with travel baseball and pickleball tournaments, she said. Segars added that the Laurens County courthouse renovations will be completed in December 2025.</p> <p>Charles Jennings said McCormick County’s state parks that were closed due to Hurricane Helene will be re-opening and encouraged visitors. Jennings said the Gold Rush Festival will be on Sept. 20 and will include a parade.</p>

Executive Director's Report	<p>Executive Director Patricia C. Hartung said the Board meeting folder packets include the SC COGs annual conference registration information and draft agenda. Hartung asked that Board members who plan to attend the conference fill out the registration forms.</p> <p>She said USCOG hosted a public administrators meeting last week that also included administrators from Batesburg-Leesville and North Augusta. The SC Energy Office made a presentation about available grants, she said.</p> <p>Hartung reminded the Board that USCOG activity reports are in their meeting folder packets.</p> <p>Hartung said she enjoyed hearing board member reports from their communities and that we will continue this practice at future board meetings for the foreseeable future.</p>
Adjourn	<p>Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.</p>



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director