



ROCK HILL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

September 2, 2025

The Executive Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at noon in City Hall Room 373.

Committee Members Present:

| | | |
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| Robert Alexander | Joel Hamilton | Dr. Stacey Moore |
| John Black | Justin Smith | Jim Reno |
| Joanne Fockler | Joanne Fockler | |

Others Present:

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Lisa Brown | David Lawrence | Rick Norwood |
| Jason Flora | Daimen Hoover | Eduardo Venegas |
| John Gettys, Mayor | David Vehaun | |

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Robert Alexander at 12:06pm.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes of the Mary 6, 2025, meeting made by Dr. Stacey Moore, second by John Black. All in favor, motion carried.
- III. **Financials – Daimen Hoover**
 - a. **Review and Approval of Financial Reports as of: July 31, 2025**
 - I. Review of SFP as of July 31, 2024 – No significant changes as of July 31, 2025.
 - II. Review of SOA as of March 31, 2025 – No significant transactions as of July 31, 2025
 - III. Motion to approve the Financial Reports as of July 31, 2025 made by Robert Alexander, second by Dr. Stacey Moore. All in favor, motion carried.
 - b. **FY2025 Financial Updates – Daimen Hoover**
 - I. Audit Start Date 8/28/2025 - Foard and Company, PA
 - II. 990 to be prepared upon completion of audit - Foard and Company, PA
 - III. 2019 RTS Loan – No current Principal Payment due yearly 3.25% interest payment totaling 10,736.29 due in November 2025.
 - IV. Catawba Regional COGs RLF – Paid of by the CoRH in FY2024-2025.
 - V. Investment in Joint ED Fund dissolved when MOU was signed and RHEDC money being held CoRH has been returned.
- IV. **Old Business – Lisa**
 - a. Placemaking Update: Alleyway Updates
 - I. Made small, but meaningful physical improvements, such as pressure washing, lighting repairs and other enhancements to downtown alleyways.

- II. Opened new communication channels with adjacent property owners to build support for future activations and improvements.
- III. Alleyway names were approved
- IV. Printers Alleyway – The committee will prioritize this alleyway for improvements. A call for Artist/Designers/Architects will be done this fall.
- V. Executive committee comments
 - 1. Great ideas glad to see tangible improvements being made to alleyways and there is hope this success will continue.

b. Small Business/Entrepreneurship Committee:

- I. Recommendations - Goal: “As a result of stakeholder feedback, present recommendations to City Council on ways to support small business concerns”
 - 1. ADA Compliance and Building Improvement Incentive Program
 - a. The “Rock Hill for All” incentive Program
 - i. Create a program that is designed to help small businesses meet ADA compliance, bring buildings up to code, and comply with landscaping and sidewalk requirements. The goal will be to enhance accessibility and safety ensuring the benefits is for both business and the broader community.
 - b. Key Features:
 - i. Grants or low interest loans for ADA upgrades, structural improvements, and landscaping/sidewalk enhancements.
 - ii. Enhance accessibility and compliance across the city.
 - iii. Attracts more diverse customers and businesses by fostering inclusivity.
 - iv. Reduces long-term maintenance challenges for property owners.
 - c. Updates since recommendation:
 - i. The City’s recent Economic Development Incentive program re-write allows for these type of incentive allowances.
 - ii. Staff are reaching out to quasi-governmental entities about low-interest loans/other options.
 - d. Executive committee comments
 - i. This is a great idea to have new more flexible grants while not getting rid of the old grant opportunities and folding GMI and Facade into the new more flexible grant opportunity.

- ii. Some potential loan programs SSBCI can offer an easier access to loans. These loans are lower rate than SBA loans.
- iii. Plan to still leverage COG and other partners.

2. Business Navigator Program

- a. Proactively assist small businesses in navigating the complexities of city regulatory systems, permitting processes, and accessing local and regional resources.
- b. Key Features
 - i. A dedicated city liaison (Business Navigator) to guide businesses through permitting and compliance processes. This is different from the current ombudsman position which focuses on process improvement and troubleshooting, which is more of a reactive role.
 - ii. Connection to countywide resources, funding opportunities, and membership networks.
 - iii. Ongoing relationship management to nurture collaboration between the city and local businesses.
- c. Benefits
 - i. Reduces barrier for small businesses.
 - ii. Fosters a supportive environment for entrepreneurs increasing confidence among the business community.
 - iii. Strengthens relationships between the city and the business community.
 - iv. Encouragement of Entrepreneurship: By lowering barriers to entry, the program creates a more welcoming environment for start ups and small business.
- d. Updates since recommendation
 - i. Staff are researching this option; potentially could retool an existing position, but more information is needed.
- e. Executive committee comments
 - i. Communicaiton from city has been bad over the recent years and this could be a great way to fix the communication gap.
 - ii. The ombudsman is great, but the position is reactive, and this can cause more frustration for business owners.

- iii. Sitting down face to face with business owners can help create a more personable feel for businesses.
 - iv. Currently this position may need to be discussed during the budgeting process in January if a new position is created. Staff is still researching if this position can be retooled this would potentially allow for the position to be created sooner than next fiscal year.
- 3. An independent Marketing Review and Campaign
 - a. Recommend hiring an external marketing agency to lead a campaign promoting local small businesses and to explore how Rock Hill is currently perceived. The goal is to boost visibility, support cohesive messaging across city initiatives.
 - b. Key features
 - i. Hiring an external marketing agency: Engage professionals with experience in small business promotion and community marketing
 - ii. Promote Local Small Businesses: Develop campaigns that highlight entrepreneurs and drive local engagement.
 - iii. Explore city brand perception: Assess how Rock Hill is viewed to inform future positioning efforts.
 - c. Benefits
 - i. Boost visibility for local entrepreneurs
 - ii. Attracts new businesses and talent to the city
 - iii. Creates cohesive city identity and messaging
 - iv. Encourages collaboration across sectors
 - d. Update since recommendation
 - i. The Tourism Marketing brand will accomplish much of this. Estimate final report will be available in October
 - ii. This brand includes highlighting activities and businesses for people to explore outside of sports venue
 - iii. Contains a suggested campaign for “Love Local” to engage residents to be ambassadors and staycationers
 - iv. When report is received, will share with committee + will move relevant recommendations forward
 - e. Executive Committee comments
 - i. Shop local campaign in the fall
 - ii. Digital kiosk could allow for small businesses to be recognized during events especially events that have a small break around an hour.

iii. Old Town Association is back and actively putting on events.

II. Gravity Center partnership

- a. Agreement put in place February 2025 for 3 years with declining reimbursement amounts every year.
- b. Pam Alexander has been hired as the Coordinator for the FUEL program.
- c. To date, we have reimbursed \$7,108 of the \$30,000 allowable.
- d. Executive committee comments
 - i. Robert Alexander is no longer on the board for the gravity center due to his wife having the gravity center position
 - ii. Ai tool being used for minimal viable product solution by applicants for these applicants to better understand how much sales will be needed to earn income.

c. Infrastructure + Development Committee

I. TIP strategies report

- 1. Final report was received 6/27/25 with an implementation matrix and “high priority actions”
- 2. Prospect visit with Strangeworks – quantum computing company from Austin, TX – reinforced these types of opportunities
- 3. High Priority actions
 - a. Staff are evaluating these priority actions based on cost, feasibility, and integration with existing efforts
 - i. 1.1.1. Reconfigure the RHEDC website to highlight the three identified target industry sectors.
 - ii. 1.6.4. Pursue development of the Rock Hill Overlook site (245 acres, currently owned by the City) by strengthening buy-in and considering optimal land use strategies.
 - iii. 1.6.5. Generate a new real estate development, redevelopment, and occupancy strategy for Knowledge Park, with particular attention paid to The Thread (a 400,000 square-foot adaptive reuse site of an old textile mill).
 - iv. 2.1.5. Form industry cluster groups of local business leaders that meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss challenges and opportunities facing their companies. These industry cluster groups should be organized around the three target industries and would involve

quarterly or bi-monthly meetings of local industry experts.

- v. 2.2.3. Provide targeted incentives for local corporate capital investment.
- vi. 2.4.5. Initiate the formation of a new business ownership fund in Rock Hill to create greater economic opportunities for underserved communities.
- vii. 3.3.1. Use the regional capital organizations highlighted in the ecosystem map (Figure 2, page 4) as targets for planning outreach and collaboration over the next five years.
- viii. 3.5.1. Offer up to \$50,000 for up to ten federal SBIR/STTR award recipient companies via the new program.
- ix. 3.7.4. Evaluate hosting opportunities for smaller-scale events in Rock Hill.
- x. 4.2.1. Leverage Winthrop University's new strategic direction to enhance its STEM talent development capacity.
- xi. 4.2.3. Work with Winthrop University, York Tech, and Clinton College to launch a human performance certificate program, modeled after Portland State University's Athletic and Outdoor Industry certificate.
- xii. 4.6.1. Recommend to the City to conduct a feasibility study to assess the product-market fit and potential fiscal impact.

4. Executive committee comments

- a. The report is slimmed down however there is still more work to determine which goals to work on achieving. Especially related to the recommendations that require partnership. TIP Strategies did not confirm again that all parties would be willing to work together to achieve goals.
- b. While the report is still lengthy and hard to digest it does provide good recommendations on things to try.

V. New Business/Other

a. Workforce Development:

I. The Force

- 1. Mission: The I-77 Corridor in South Carolina is rich with workforce resources. THE FORCE serves as a trusted guide, helping businesses navigate and understand the abundant resources available. We are a collection of workforce organizations that thrive together, helping employers connect to the right education, talent, and training solutions.

This is accomplished through an intentional, streamlined, concierge-style approach to workforce development. Together, we are THE FORCE which aligns the region’s workforce ecosystem to power our communities' future success.

2. THE FORCE serves as a trusted guide, helping businesses navigate and understand the abundant resources
 - a. Company Needs Assessment
 - b. Pre-Employment Training and Education
 - c. Screening & Recruitment
 - d. Customized Technical Training
 - e. Continuous improvement
3. This is not the finalized version of The Force as it is still currently being cultivated and could adjust

II. Committee Project Updates

1. EPIC Challenge Work-based Learning Project with students at the Applied Technology Center: Communicating Pathways & Career Exploration in Advanced Manufacturing
2. Touch-A-Truck Career Exploration: Ebinport Elementary K – 3rd Grade

III. Executive Committee comments

1. This is a great starting point to show a potential new business some local examples that could be used are Chloroplast as they have previously had a partnership in place with York Tech.
2. Engaging young minds in what the modern manufacturing is a great idea and will allow for further growth in the field. As Rock Hill is working to recruit manufacturing it is important to have a work force that can readily fill these positions.
3. First robotics is a potential program that York Tech and the city are working on partnering together to bring an experience that could be a steppingstone to interest into manufacturing and related degrees.

- b. Next meeting focus on talking about the Barre Mitchell fund.

VI. Adjourn: Robert Alexander adjourned the meeting at 1:32pm

| <u>Upcoming Event</u> | <u>Details</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student Made Ribbon Cutting | September 4 th – Brakefield – Hickory Post 10:30am |