



EDACC Board Meeting Minutes

December 12, 2025

EDACC Conference Room

Meeting called by	Chairman, Rick Evans - called the meeting to order @ 7:33					
Type of meeting	Board Meeting					
Facilitator	Chairman, Rick Evans					
Note taker	Linda Peplau					
Adjourned	8:13 AM					
Board Attendance	Rick Evans	Y	Mark Wills	Y	Stan Shepherd	Y
	Jim Cox	Y	Jean Garniewicz	Y	Kerry Bridges	ABSENT
	Mark Herbert	ABSENT	Ben Stapleton	ABSENT	Rick Toole	Y
Staff/Guests	Cheney Eldridge, Anita Patel, Stuart Hilsman, Linda Peplau, Chris Driver, Dr. Steven Flynt (CCBOE), Commissioner Connie Melear (CCBOC), Commissioner Jim Steed (CCBOC), William Eubank (Thomas & Hutton), Skyler Andrews (The Augusta Press), Anastasia Black (Corporate Environments of Georgia).					

Meeting Agenda

1 minute	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	Chairman Rick Evans called for a motion to jointly approve the agenda for the December 12, 2025, EDACC Board Meeting, the minutes from the November 19, 2025, EDACC Board Meeting, and the minutes from the Called Board Meeting on December 5, 2025.
Conclusions	Motion: Jim Cox 2nd: Rick Toole Motion carries unanimously (6-0).

Minutes of Previous Meeting

0 minutes	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	See above.
Conclusions	Motion: Jim Cox 2nd: Rick Toole Motion carries unanimously (6-0).

Chairman Opening remarks

3 minutes	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	<p>Chairman Rick Evans made the following acknowledgments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended sincere thanks:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Thanked the EDACC staff for planning the festivities for the board.◦ Thanked Chris Driver for his hard work on the closing and the project as a whole.◦ Thanked all board members for their hard work and patience.◦ Thanked Cheney Eldridge for the time and effort she invested in the project and for leading her team throughout the year.• Stan Shepherd extended a heartfelt thank you to Rick Evans for his time, support, and hard work on behalf of the entire EDACC Board.



DACC Financial Report

9 minutes	Treasurer, Mark Wills & Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	<p>Treasurer, Mark Wills reported on the following items in the November 2025 financial report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audit updates:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Reported that the audit is still in progress.◦ Mark Wills commended Rick Evans for his outstanding collaboration with the county in successfully completing the requested audit adjustments.• Page 1 (balance sheet):<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provided an asset and liability report from the totals on page 1.◦ Reported on a liability item (Escrow Deposit from County) scheduled for repayment to the county in the near future.• Page 2 & 3 (monthly expenses)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Reported that the rent income error related to the Chamber's sublease rent fees for the office building in October's financial report has been corrected and is now properly netted against the rent expense.• Page 6 (2026 FY budget)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Highlighted the IRB annual fees income collected to date and noted that it will increase upon receipt of one additional payment.◦ Reported that the current report indicates expenses are at 84% and are tracking well. <p>Chairman, Rick Evans shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• White Oak phase II & III closing update.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Reported that he is collaborating with the County Director of Financial Services, Leanne Reece, to ensure the closing funds are properly recorded through journal entries.◦ Shared that the closing funds will be held in the Phase III M/M account.◦ First State Bank loan payoff (paid at closing).◦ It was agreed upon that the lift station expenditures will be reimbursed to the county.◦ The White Oak expansion escrow deposit from the county will be reimbursed back to the county.◦ Rick reported that the county will be compiling a detailed breakdown of all capital expenses related to White Oak to facilitate expense reimbursement.
Conclusions	<p>Chairman Rick Evans informed the board that during the Executive Committee meeting on December 10, 2026, it was agreed to approve the November financial statements, as the data is presented cumulatively in the current report and no further audit corrections were requested.</p> <p>Chairman, Rick Evans called for a motion to approve the November 2025 Financial Reports.</p> <p>Motion: Stan Shepherd 2nd: Jean Garniewicz. Motion carries unanimously (6-0)</p>



Chairman's Report

2 minutes	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	<p>Chairman, Rick Evans shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• White Oak Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Phase I Parcels:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Sold select parcels to provide access.* 77 acres remain in Phase I.• Strategy Session Planning:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Objectives:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Improve our Mission Statement.* Define Goals to Achieve for the upcoming period.* Establish a Nomination Committee to identify and recommend nominees.- Rick Evans asked for recommendations.

EDACC Committee Reports

1 minute	Jim Cox, for Business Recruitment & Incentive Program Committee (12.03.2025 = CANCELED)
Discussion	<p>Jim Cox shared the following topics from the Business Recruitment & Incentive Program Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jim reported that the committee meeting originally scheduled for December 3, 2025, was canceled due to scheduling conflicts.

Project Updates

4 minutes	Project Manager, Stuart Hilsman
Discussion	<p>Stuart Hilsman shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stuarts reported that Augusta Tech has appointed Dr. Abel Salazar as the new Community Education Director.• Project updates:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ 12 total projects◦ Potential Investment Opportunity<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Estimated Value: North of \$100 million* Projected Job Creation: Approximately 300 positions◦ 1 potential extension for an existing industry has been identified.◦ Tariff implications for future projects are a key discussion point, as their impact is an uncertainty.• Acknowledgment<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Stuart expressed gratitude to the board and the team for supporting his growth and development.◦ The board extended appreciation for Stuart's hard work and dedication throughout the past year.



Economic Development Update

8 minutes	Executive Director, Cheney Eldridge
Discussion	<p>Executive Director, Cheney Eldridge shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheney provided a comprehensive update on the White Oak Settlement (Land Transaction):<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ 1600 parcels of phase II and phase III of White Oak were sold to Trammell Crow Co.◦ EDACC has recouped all carrying costs.◦ Settlement funds have been placed in the Phase III bank account.◦ Escrow funds (initial deposit to secure the loan) will be repaid to the county.◦ Attorney fees were fully recovered at closing.◦ EDACC received 12 months of loan interest (paid by EDACC) reimbursement from the buyer.◦ The loan for Phase III purchase was paid in full to the bank at closing.◦ 77 acres remain in Phase I.◦ Cheney reported that all capital costs paid by the county for the construction of White Oak will be reimbursed by the Development Authority.• *** Key Highlight:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ No interest payments were covered by the county.◦ All loan payments were paid 100% by the Development Authority, eliminating any need to reimburse the county for interest paid to the bank for the loan in 2025.• Project updates/next step of the White Oak project:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ All parcels will be rezoned to DC zoning status, including those currently zoned as S-1.◦ The buyer, Trammell Crow, is expected to close on the remaining parcel soon, approximately 30 days after rezoning is completed.• Cheney reported that Strategy Session planning is currently in motion.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ The Strategy Session will address key topics that require decision-making to ensure alignment on priorities and next steps, while partnering with the county to achieve a successful outcome.• Acknowledgments:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheney expressed gratitude to the board for their trust and confidence during times of uncertainty.• Cheney expressed appreciation to Chris Driver and Rick Evans for the many hours they invested in the project during uncharted waters. She also thanked the staff for their hard work and growth throughout the process.
Conclusions	Chairman Rick Evans noted that there are still many unanswered questions and emphasized the importance of maintaining ongoing communication with the county.



Public Comments

11 minutes	Commissioner Connie Melear (CCBOC), Commissioner Jim Steed (CCBOC), Dr. Steven Flynt (CCBOE), William Eubank (Thomas & Hutton) & Skyler Andrews (The Augusta Press)
Discussion	<p>Chairman Rick Evans expressed appreciation to Skyler Andrews of The Augusta Press for his fair reporting of EDACC throughout 2025.</p> <p>Skyler Andrews of The Augusta Press thanked the board for inviting him to their Christmas breakfast and expressed appreciation for their recognition of his work.</p> <p>Commissioner Jim Steed (CCBOC) expressed his interest in learning more about the organization and getting to know everyone better.</p> <p>Commissioner, Connie Melear (CCBOC) shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rezoning updates = Approximately 3,500 acres will be rezoned to DC zoning status.• Tax Review & Offset Possibilities:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Exploring options such as homestead exemptions to achieve the goal of giving back to citizens. <p>Dr. Steven Flynt (CCBOE) shared the following school updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expressed gratitude to the EDACC Board for their efforts in the community, for the invitation to the holiday breakfast, and for their ongoing commitment to workforce development.• Reported that the goal of the CCBOE is to modernize schools by adding advanced labs to strengthen workforce development and better prepare students for future opportunities.• School construction approvals = Harlem has been approved to move forward with construction.• Dr. Flynt proudly announced that the Columbia County Board of Education has been selected to participate in the upcoming state conference, providing an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions, address key educational challenges, and explore strategies for continued excellence.

Calendar of Events

1 minute	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	<p>Addressed the 2026 Board & committee meeting schedule that was handed out to each member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• January 09, 2026 - Existing Business & Workforce Committee• January 21, 2026 - Executive Committee Meeting• January 28, 2026 - EDACC Board Meeting

Closed Session

Discussion	N/A
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Adjournment		8:13 AM
Conclusions	Chairman, Rick Evans calls for a motion to adjourn the December 12, 2025, EDACC board meeting at 8:13 a.m. Motioned: Jim Cox 2nd: Mark Wills Motion carries unanimously (6-0)	

Next meeting: January 28, 2026	EDACC	All
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