



EDACC Business Recruitment and Incentives Program Committee		
February 18, 2026		9:20 AM
EDACC Conference Room		
Meeting called by	Jim Cox called the meeting to order at 9:20 AM	
Type of meeting	Business Recruitment and Incentives Program Committee	
Facilitator	Chair - Jim Cox	
Note taker	Linda Peplau	
Adjourned	10:07 AM	
Attendees	Jim Cox, Ben Stapleton & Mark Wills	
Staff/Guests	Rick Evans, Cheney Eldridge, Anita Patel, Stuart Hilsman & Linda Peplau, Skyler Andrews (Augusta Press)	
Meeting Agenda		
1 minute	Jim Cox	
Discussion	Jim Cox called for a motion to jointly approve the agenda for February 18, 2026, Business Recruitment and Incentives Program Committee meeting & the minutes for the October 01, 2025, Business Recruitment and Incentive Committee meeting.	
Conclusions	Motion: Mark Wills 2nd: Ben Stapleton Motion passed unanimously (3-0)	
Minutes of Previous Meeting		
0 minutes	Jim Cox	
Discussion	See above.	
Conclusions	Motion: Mark Wills 2nd: Ben Stapleton Motion passed unanimously (3-0)	
Old Business		
10 minutes	Cheney Eldridge & Jim Cox	
Discussion	<p>Cheney Eldridge shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheney provided a White Oak rezoning update. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All parcels related to the data center project at White Oak Park have been approved for rezoning, except one due to a typographical error. The parcel with the error will be submitted for rezoning once the correction has been advertised for the required period. ○ Cheney provided the rezoning results from the most recent BOC meeting for projects not associated with EDACC. ○ Cheney presented the committee with a newly printed map that provides a clearer illustration of the current projects. ○ Jim Cox initiated a discussion that covered the state's strict data center guidelines and the construction timeline for the White Oaks DC project. 	



New Business	
14 minutes	Cheney Eldridge & Jim Cox
Discussion	<p>Cheney Eldridge shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheney reported that EDACC and the county are currently collaborating on the budget for FY 2028. • Targeting Future Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jim Cox suggested EDACC's involvement in facilitating the construction of a new crime lab to serve Columbia County. * Discussed the county's need for a crime lab to expedite testing results for court proceedings and law enforcement. * Cheney offered to leverage her contacts and reach out to Augusta University to inquire about equipment that may be available for recycling for the Crime Lab. ○ Ben Stapleton added that it would be beneficial to construct something that generates a revenue stream for EDACC while also involving the JDA to foster regional collaboration. ○ Mark Wills suggested including Jean Garniewicz in the Crime Lab discussions, as she has developed strong connections with the Columbia County Police Department through her volunteer work. • Guest Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rick Evans suggested creating a list of potential projects to be vetted and presented to end users for possible collaboration efforts aimed at community engagement initiatives.



Updates	
23 minutes	Cheney Eldridge
Discussion	<p>Cheney Eldridge shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheney enthusiastically announced that EDACC has been actively working with Trader Joe’s on an expansion into Evans, GA, and that the retailer recently confirmed the collaboration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cheney provided an overview of the retailer’s expansion business model, highlighting the approach of reuse versus new construction. ○ She also outlined some key data points the retailer researches before entering a community. ○ A specific location is currently being discussed and narrowed down. ○ The retailer has not applied for any permits yet. <p>Jim Cox shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim shared that Mosh Pit Eats purchased the old Electrolux building on Washington Road and plans to develop a multi-retail space for approximately 18 small businesses to promote commerce. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jim revisited the Gather Greenville container retail space concept as a benchmark for Columbia County and expressed his hope for an ordinance change to allow this concept in Evans. • Rick Evans initiated a discussion on Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) and the opportunities they could create for the county. <p>• BOC meeting updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anita Patel announced that the commissioners voted & approved the Foundations for the Future’s comprehensive plan on the last BOC meeting dated 02/17/2026. ○ Rick recommended sharing the Foundations for the Future comprehensive plan with EDACC Board members at the next board meeting for informational purposes. <p>• Ben Stapleton shared exciting growth progress surrounding the Appling & Harlem area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Announced that Petersburg Campgrounds has partially reopened following repairs from Hurricane Helene. ○ Shared a brief Pollard Corner update. ○ The committee discussed potential new occupants for the abandoned bank building in Appling. ○ Ben initiated a discussion regarding sewer capacity limitations for new construction in Appling. <p>• Jim Cox initiated a discussion regarding the \$20 million grant awarded to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help facilitate the reopening of Lake Thurman’s surrounding campgrounds.</p> <p>• Continuing the discussion on grants, Mark Wills introduced EDACC’s grant from Georgia Power, aimed at facilitating growth.</p> <p>• Plans for the April Showcase were briefly addressed, focusing on securing dates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guest list ○ Ticket/tent cost increase ○ Red Carpet tour times and dates. <p>• After being asked by Jim Cox if he had any comments, Skyler Andrews expressed his excitement for Columbia County following the announcement of Trader Joe’s.</p>
Adjournment	
10:07 AM	
Conclusions	Jim Cox called for a motion to adjourn. Motion: Mark Wills 2nd: Ben Stapleton Motion passed unanimously (3-0)
Next meeting: April 01, 2026	Economic Development Authority Conference Room