



EDACC Executive Committee		
<b>March 18, 2026</b>		EDACC Conference Room
Meeting called by	Chairman, Rick Evans called the meeting to order @ 8:00 AM	
Type of meeting	Executive Committee Meeting	
Facilitator	Chairman, Rick Evans	
Note taker	Linda Peplau	
Adjourned	9:15 AM	
Attendees	Rick Evans, Stan Shepherd, Mark Wills & Jean Garniewicz	
Staff/Guests	Cheney Eldridge, Anita Patel, Stuart Hilsman & Linda Peplau	
Meeting Agenda		
1 minute	Chairman, Rick Evans	
Discussion	Chairman, Rick Evans called for a motion to jointly approve the agenda for the March 18, 2026, Executive Committee Meeting and the minutes for the February 18, 2026, Executive Committee Meeting.	
Conclusions	Motion: Jean Garniewicz 2nd: Mark Wills Motion carries unanimously (4-0)	
Minutes of Previous Meeting		
0 minutes	Chairman, Rick Evans	
Discussion	See above.	
Conclusions	Motion: Jean Garniewicz 2nd: Mark Wills Motion carries unanimously (4-0)	
DACC Financial Report		
12 minutes	Treasurer, Mark Wills	
Discussion	<p><b>Treasurer Mark Wills</b>, reported on the following items in the financial reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page 1 (balance sheet): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mark highlighted the movement of funds used to reimburse the county for the capital costs of White Oak.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Page 2 &amp; 3 (<b>monthly expenses</b>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The committee reviewed the monthly expenditures (staff provided receipts as needed).</li> <li>○ Discussed changes to cell tower income from SBA Communications due to non-payment related to an additional tenant.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Page 4 &amp; 5 (<b>Year to date total expenses &amp; revenue</b>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mark reported that there was nothing to note on those two pages.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Page 6 (<b>2026 FY budget</b>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mark confirmed that the Budget vs. Actual report on page 6 is tracking as expected, with the exception of the over-expenditure in contract services related to software.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The committee discussed the FY2027 budget and planning strategies for future allocations.</li> </ul>	
Conclusions	<p><b>Chairman, Rick Evans calls for a motion to present the February 2026 financial reports to the board. Motion: Jean Garniewicz. 2nd: Stan Shepherd Motion carries unanimously (4-0).</b></p>	



**Chairman's Report**

33 minutes	Chairman, Rick Evans
Discussion	<p>Chairman, Rick Evans shared the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rick Evans reported that the EDACC has <b>reimbursed the county</b> for capital costs of White Oak.</li> <li>• Rick reported that he and Cheney met with the county regarding <b>financial planning and the upcoming budget.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EDACC is expected to be self-sufficient next fiscal year.</li> <li>○ Stan Shepherd stated that this is a good time to conduct a review of all EDACC staff employment contracts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>RFP (Request for Proposal) and Investment Policy Development:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The committee discussed investment options and remains interested in obtaining guidance from an investment advisor to create an investment policy.</li> <li>○ Rick reported that Stuart and Mark are developing an RFP to secure an investment broker/advisor.</li> <li>○ Mark Wills has approved the RFP form to date and will email it to the Executive Committee for review before it is sent to Chris for approval and then forwarded for final approval by the Board.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Bond Payment/Pay-off options:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussed the costs of retiring the 2017 bond early, noting a penalty from the issuer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* It was decided, after further research and cost analysis, to leave the bonds as they are, as recommended by our bond counsel.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rick reported that we have <b>successfully checked off the following:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Settled county debt</li> <li>○ Worked on investment policies</li> <li>○ Formatted an RFP form</li> <li>○ Budget considerations and allocations were reviewed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Exploring Small Business Loan Programs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rick suggested meeting with SBA Lending to explore small business investment and development opportunities within the community to help foster greater community synergy.</li> <li>○ The committee discussed drafting a preliminary policy for a small business revolving loan program, outlining eligibility criteria, geographic boundaries, and funding limits for use within Columbia County.</li> <li>○ Stan recommended focusing on future growth in Harlem and Grovetown.</li> <li>○ Mark Wills outlined the advantages of utilizing established lending institutions, noting benefits such as extended repayment terms and improved financing options, while also explaining the processes involved in expanding lending programs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Economic Development Updates	
16 minutes	Executive Director, Cheney Eldridge
Discussion	<p>Executive Director, <b>Cheney Eldridge</b> shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheney provided a <b>rezoning update</b>, including the status of the appeal, the required 30 day waiting period, the county's filings for dismissal, the project hearing dates scheduled for Thursday (03/18/2026), as well as current project setbacks.</li> <li>• She shared an update on <b>April Showcase planning</b>, including the preliminary guest list and the week's schedule, such as the Board dinner and the JDA dinner on Thursday.</li> <li>• <b>Operations &amp; technology upgrades:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cheney opened the discussion by outlining her goal to replace EDACC staff computers and laptops. She noted potential cost savings available through the County Procurement Department and the need to adjust the technology budget accordingly.</li> <li>○ She provided clarification on the county's data storage policies and highlighted the safeguards in place to protect sensitive information managed by the County IT Department on the server.</li> <li>○ Cheney noted that EDACC is not covered under the county's insurance policies for technology replacement. This followed comments from Stan Shepherd and Rick Evans regarding the importance of utilizing county technology insurance when possible.</li> <li>○ She reported that EDACC has been assigned a new line code for technology expenses by County Finance.</li> <li>○ She also shared that she is actively exploring enhanced staff benefit options with an outside benefits broker.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Board Training updates:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A brief update was provided, sharing key takeaways from the two-hour BOOST Board training session held on March 17, 2026, including upcoming training requirements for re-appointees.</li> <li>○ The 8-hour training is scheduled for 04/22/2026 &amp; 04/23/2026.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Old Business	
0 minutes	
N/A	N/A



New Business	
13 Minutes	Executive Director, Cheney Eldridge
Discussion	<p>Executive Director, Cheney Eldridge shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Committee reporting changes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cheney proposed having EDACC staff read committee meeting minutes at future Board meetings to streamline and simplify reporting while keeping staff engaged.</li> <li>○ The committee discussed and agreed to include Committee Reports under Economic Development Updates in a summarized format, to be read by a member of the EDACC staff.</li> <li>○ Rick Evans suggests giving each committee chair a courtesy call to confirm there is nothing else to report before the board meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Future Plans and Strategic Development:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The committee discussed potential <b>joint venture opportunities</b> and the possible purchase of a parcel from a current tenant, emphasizing the need for strategic planning for future partnerships and acquisitions following further review of the previous purchase contract.</li> <li>○ Cheney reported that she will be attending the <b>Site Selector Guild</b> in Atlanta next week to meet with top site selectors for company recruitment and networking opportunities.</li> <li>○ Cheney shared that EDACC will be featured in the April issue of <b>Columbia County Magazine with an article</b> highlighting the new data center and technology park project at White Oak.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Adjournment	
Conclusions	Chairman Rick Evans calls for a motion to adjourn @ 9:15 Motion: Stan Shepherd 2nd: Jean Garniewicz Motion carries unanimously (4-0)
Next meetings: <b>April 20, 2026</b>	Economic Development Authority Conference Room