



EDACC Existing Business and Workforce Development Committee		
March 13, 2026		EDACC Conference Room
Called by	Jean Garniewicz - called the meeting to order at 8:58	
Meeting	Existing Business and Workforce Development Committee	
Facilitator	Jean Garniewicz	
Note taker	Linda Peplau	
Adjourned	9:52 AM	
Attendees	Jean Garniewicz, Rick Evans & Kerry Bridges	
Staff/Guests	Anita Patel, Stuart Hilsman & Linda Peplau, & Skyler Andrews (Augusta Press)	
Meeting Agenda		
1 minute	Jean Garniewicz	
Discussion	Jean Garniewicz called for a motion to jointly approve the agenda for the March 13, 2026, Existing Business and Workforce Development Committee meeting & the minutes for the January 09, 2026, Existing Business and Workforce Development Committee meeting.	
Conclusions	Motion: Rick Evans 2nd: Kerry Bridges The motion passed unanimously (3-0)	
Minutes of Previous Meeting		
0 minutes	Jean Garniewicz	
Discussion	See above.	
Conclusions	Motion: Rick Evans 2nd: Kerry Bridges The motion passed unanimously (3-0)	
Old Business		
16 minutes	Jean Garniewicz	
Discussion	• Existing Industry Visits Updates: ○ The committee discussed the importance of conducting industry visits as a way to proactively engage with existing industries and help ensure their needs are identified and supported. * Wage survey/Work force bridging * Bonds/Military zone opportunities ○ The committee reviewed recommended industry visits for both the Board and the committee. ○ Stuart shared that he has scheduled a visit with Club Car in June. ○ Kerry Bridges suggested adding John Deere as a future visit. ○ Jean Garniewicz recommended including Club Car’s first building at White Oak and GIW on the list for future visits. ○ Kerry Bridges volunteered to coordinate and set up a tour of Plant Vogtle for the fall of 2026.	



New Business	
20 minutes	Jean Garniewicz
Discussion	• Georgia General Assembly ongoing sessions: ○ The committee openly discussed their views on various bills and reviewed several that have passed as well as those that were voted down. * Staff updated the committee on the spreadsheet of the bills being passed that effect ED. • Georgia Power updates (Kerry Bridges) ○ Kerry Bridges reiterated from the last meeting of Georgia Power's ongoing efforts to put downward pressure on their customers' monthly bills. * Freeze its base rates through 2028 * Income- Qualified Discounts ○ Kerry reported that Georgia Power is ahead of other states in requiring large-load energy users to cover the costs of grid upgrades and infrastructure improvements related to data center development, as codified by the PSC (GA Public Service Commission). ○ Kerry highlights GP's media campaign to inform customers about power usage and billing. ○ State energy rate comparison as Georgia leads with lower rates. • Rick Evans opened a discussion on new business retailer announcements. ○ Discussed Fireside Kitchens and Grills to Columbia County. ○ Stuart shared an announcement regarding an upcoming job fair designed to support the recruitment and hiring of employees for both existing companies and new businesses. ○ The committee discussed the hospital currently being constructed in Grovetown and expressed interest in touring the facility before it opens. Anita Patel offered try to organize a tour of the new hospital. ○ The committee shared their positive feedback regarding Georgia Carolina Orthopedics and Doctors Hospital's emergency room successes and their continued engagement within the community. * Anita shared that Children's Hosp. of GA received a \$50M investment for supported success. - Kerry Bridges shared, for informational purposes, that Southern Company has signed a \$26.5 billion low interest loan backed by the U.S. Department of Energy (loan details on the Dept. of Energy website). ○ \$22 billion for Georgia & \$4 billion for Alabama to support infrastructure and energy
Early exits	Kerry Bridges exits the meeting at 9:35



Updates		
17 minutes	Jean Garniewicz	
Discussion	• Future Look Ahead: ○ Rick shared key takeaways from the Property Committee meeting, including discussions on inventory investments designed to support long term, generational growth. He emphasized the importance of planning for the next 20 years, noting that two decades ago, no one anticipated this region would evolve into a major medical and technology hub. ○ Jean added that we are fortunate to have the right people in the right places at this time. ○ The Committee discussed Setting up future strategy meetings for growth planning. * Suggestion was made to meet with partners and county leaders to help shape future direction. • Workforce & Retail: ○ The importance of a strong workforce to support strong retailers in our community was noted. ○ Discussed the trend of malls making a comeback, driven in part by the high volume of returns associated with online purchases. ○ Stuart shared insights on the shift from traditional fast food to casual dining, noting that recent price increases have been a key factor influencing consumer preferences. ○ The committee discussed ongoing housing challenges and the rising cost of homeownership, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues to support and sustain a strong local workforce. • The staff provided updates on the April Showcase, including the guest list and the events schedule.	
Adjournment		9:52 AM
Conclusions	Jean Garniewicz called for a motion to adjourn: Motion: Rick Evans 2nd: Jean Garniewicz The motion passed unanimously (3-0)	
Next meeting: July 10, 2026 @ 9:00		Economic Development Authority Conference Room