

TOWN OF BLUFFTON DON RYAN CENTER FOR INNOVATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Palmetto Electric Community Center
1 Cooperative Way, Hardeeville, SC 29927
January 9, 2020 Board Meeting



Board Members Present: Matt Green, Chair – Director, Berl Davis, Vice Chair – Director, Michael Mathews, Secretary - Director; Bernie Traywick, Director; Kevin Ryan, Director; Matthew Raehn, Director; Larry Hughes, Director; Walter Nester, Director; Lisa Sulka, Town of Bluffton Mayor – Director

Board Members Absent: Edward Taylor, Director

Ex-Officio Present: Mike Levine, CEO DRCI; Natalie Majorkiewicz, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member, Treasurer; Louise Hodges, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member; Larry Toomer, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member; Mark Polites, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member

Ex-Officio Absent: Ariana Pernice, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member; Mark Polites, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member; Ryan Clark, Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member

Town Staff Present: Jessica Sferlazzo, DRCI Community and Operations Manager; Lauren Brooks, DRCI Marketing and Operations Assistant

Town Council Present: n/a

Public Present: John O’Toole and Charlie Stone, Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation

I. CALL TO ORDER

Green called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Sferlazzo took roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Hughes made a motion to approve the Town of Bluffton Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI) Board of Directors Meeting Agenda as presented. Ryan seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. MINUTES

Green asked if there were any changes to be made to October 12, 2019 minutes. Hodges stated one change. Change was noted. Hughes made a motion to approve the October 12, 2019 minutes. Nester seconded the motion. All were in favor and the October 12, 2019 minutes were approved.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Every member of the public who is recognized to speak shall address the Chairman and in speaking, avoid disrespect to the Board, Town Staff, and other members of the meeting. State your name and address when speaking for the record. **COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO THREE (3) MINUTES.**

There were no Public Comments.

VI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Sulka noted that she is on the Scholarship Committee for the Heritage Foundation and students are working on apps. Noted how important it is to keep these students in our area after graduation.

Green thanked Levine for all his efforts coming on board to DRCI.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT

Majorkiewicz stated DRCI is under target due to HUB not being open and short of incubators, also noted that expenses are decreased as well.

Mathews asked about the Town budget cycle and requested the Board sees preliminary budgets with adequate time to review and provide comment. Levine stated adequate timing will be provided and the process will not be last minute.

VIII. CEO REPORT

Levine gave personnel update. Stated search for VP of Innovation is in progress and process is going well.

Welcome Lauren Brooks as marketing and operations assistant, will be critical aspect of getting The HUB at Buckwalter set up.

Wes Bray has resigned from Board. Green praised Wes for his great work and dedication to DRCI and suggested Board reach out and wish him many thanks and wish him well. Levine mentioned he will look to Board for support and clarification on Board member replacement.

Levine presented HUB update and stated it is moving along very quickly now. Still targeting end of March to begin move in.

Levine asked Board for thoughts on June for a Grand Opening event. Sulka mentioned to check with St. Joseph Candler to see when their grand opening will be. Sulka also mentioned to make sure we are aware of high school graduation dates when decided on a date for the Grand Opening.

Levine gave an update on new website and mentioned DRCI is working on a request for procurement (RFP) for marketing services for 1 year to get DRCI set on the path to drive all points of revenue. Gave brief overview of what services DRCI is looking for: web content, SEO (Town and DRCI), lead generation, email campaign, brand identity.

Economic Development

John O'Toole gave update on Beaufort County Economic Development.

BCEDC is continuing to work with military on workforce development along with existing graduating from TCL and USCB.

Considering a fundraising partnership to help raise funds for BCEDC, BDC and DRCI.

Marketing and Operations Manager Report

Sferlazzo gave update of Membership and stated Q2 was very strong for both new members and renewals. Mathews stated he would like to see report based on actual member revenue versus budgeted revenue.

Sferlazzo stated the team is working on a membership 2.0 program to coincide with opening of The HUB.

Sferlazzo gave overview of social media and web analytics. Stated reach, impressions and followers are steadily increasing each month.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

X. NEW BUSINESS

Sulka made a motion to accept 2020 Board Meeting Schedule, Hughes seconded the motion, all were in favor and the 2020 Board Meeting Schedule was approved.

Hours of operation

Levine looked to Board for comments on hours of operation. Levine suggested starting with Town operating hours. Toomer stated that many our innovators would want to utilize the space 24/7. Ryan mentioned perhaps there should be access hours and office hours. Innovators should be able to access 24/7. Green said there is no way the HUB can operate on town hours. Most of Board agreed to 24/7 access.

Nester stated we don't know what to expect yet and disagreed with the 24/7 schedule. Thought Levine's original plan of Town hours would be a starting point. Green stated the test hours should be at least 7am-8am to 9pm.

Majority of Board agreed to 7am-10pm 7 days a week. Follow up to come.

XI. DISCUSSION

Tenant Profile

Levine reiterated we will focus on the following target areas but until we open the doors, we really won't know who we will be serving or how this could change:

For-Profit Business Model

Industries Applying Technology to:

- Aerospace & Defense
- Software Technology
- Healthcare
- Life Science
- Light Manufacturing
- Food Innovation

Service Provider to Tech Companies

Levine believes while our goal is to focus on the vertical markets above, the reality is we will work with other industries not listed above until a point where we have a viable pipeline to target those verticals.

Bridge Fund Update

Levine mentioned partnership with Taylor and Majorkiewicz along with Bonnett in Savannah to gain better understanding of scope of project. Davis asked how funds will be allocated between Creative Coast and DRCI. Levine stated he is just getting started with the project and will report back at the next Board Meeting.

Feeding Innovation

DRCI will be hosting Feeding Innovation, an 8-week program focusing on companies looking to start or expand healthy food businesses. A \$20,000 seed prize will be awarded to one company on finale event May 20th.

Lowcountry Works

New and improved version to be released in Spring.

Mentor Relaunch

Levine wanted Board opinion on working with SCORE on DRCI Mentor program. Sulka mentioned that it's important to keep our current mentors but understands need for partnership. Both Mathews and Green agreed that a potential partnership could work out for all parties. Green cautioned to set parameters.

Foundation

Levine asked Sulka and Ryan for update on DRCI Foundation mission. Sferlazzo stated that per the last board meeting in lieu of fundraising then how are we feeding the foundation? Levine asked what foundation does with cash? Green stated foundation was created to allow DRCI to be self-sustaining. When merger occurred, a new mission for DRCI was created. Foundation is still there and the purpose but still believes the intent is to become self-sustaining. Hughes suggested having the new director of the foundation to Board Meeting for further clarity.

Mathews stated there needs to be a strategic plan and marketing plan on how to get the foundation funded to the original goal. Levine stated he would take lead and put a Board subcommittee together on plan to execute.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Green made a motion to adjourn the Don Ryan Center for Innovation Board of Directors meeting. Hughes seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Certified: Michael Mathews 8/31/20