

**Hardee County Economic Development Council/Industrial Development Authority**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**March 17, 2015**  
**Hardee County BOCC**

**Vanessa Hernandez- Chair-P**  
**Gene Davis- Vice Chair-P**  
Dottie Conerly-P  
Diana Youmans-P

Donald Samuels-P  
John O'Neal-A  
Michael Prescott-P

Doug Jensen-P  
Monica Reas-P  
Lory Durrance-P

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am by Chair Hernandez.

**Visiting:** Lex Albritton, Stan Pelham, Pam Belflower, Bob Belflower, Don Chancey, Autumn Blum, Butch Spearman, Randy Bennett, Carl Saunders, Kenny Lambert, Frank Kirkland, Trisha Floyd, Pastor Lyndsay Naranjo, Grady Johnson, Casey Dickson, David Royal, Kristin Giuliani, Vanessa Thomas, Mike Deeson, Rhonda Cole, Barbara Carlton, Loran Cogburn, Frank Kirkland, Sharon Moye, Keith Rupp, Danielle White, Marie Lambert, Pam Lovett, Travis Bond and his employees at Tech River.

**County Attorney:** Ken Evers

**County Commissioners:** Mike Thompson, Colon Lambert, Russ Melendy, Rick Knight and Sue Birge

**Press:** Michael Kelly

**Staff:** Bill Lambert, Sarah Pelham and Kristi Schierling

**Agenda:** Doug Jensen made a motion and was seconded by Dottie Conerly to accept the agenda as printed. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hernandez asked Travis Bond to step up to the podium and give a quick update. Mr. Bond passed out some information showing all of the accomplishments and awards that have been given to Continuum Labs. He also had his staff stand up. There were a few that stayed behind at the office. There were about 25 employees here at the meeting. One employee (Leslie) thanked the IDA for allowing them to come today and supporting their project.

***Review/Discuss/Approve responses***

Chair Hernandez made the changes discussed at last week's meeting to the section about jobs for Hardee County citizens. She read this aloud and it is on page 16 of the Chair responses. One board member said that we should really focus on this once we are in the contract writing stage so it is recognized that the whole purpose is job and growth opportunities for Hardee County citizens. It should be stressed but not put us in the position of selecting their candidates for them.

***Discuss/Approve Grand Jury recommendations***

Chair Hernandez read her additional responses.

**First recommendation (related to the grant process)-**Attorney Evers said to take the recommendation as constructive criticism. Attorney Evers gave the history of the grant cycle. The IDA has only had one grant cycle. Attorney Evers recommends to develop a written policy of the type of processes that the EDA uses to the extent we can. Also incorporate all the recommendations we can and commence the process immediately.

Doug Jensen made a motion and was seconded by Dottie Conerly to have the IDA Attorney to start the procedure of developing an outline for the grant process and to bring back to the Board for approval. Motion passed unanimously.

**Second recommendation (related to not having an expert)**- The board does not disagree with this one. Part of the procedure, which was in the motion above, should be to bring in outside experts.

**Third recommendation (related to legal counsel)**- The Board can bring in additional counsel. Attorney Evers is the EDA attorney by state statute. Attorney Evers recommends to respond to this recommendation by getting co-counsel as a second set of eyes and to comply with the spirit of this recommendation. Board members agree to get co-counsel.

Doug Jensen made a motion and was seconded by Donald Samuels to direct Attorney Evers to search for outside counsel and bring back recommendations to the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

**Fourth recommendation (related to open positions/jobs)**- This has already been addressed in the other document titled *Hardee County Industrial Development Authority Response to the Release of January 7, 2015 Presentment* on page 16. We can implement it into this document.

**Fifth recommendation (related to annual evaluations)**- Chair Hernandez has reached out to other Economic Development agencies to see what their evaluation process is. We do need to develop a procedure for evaluation of staff. The EDC/IDA should be the one to evaluate Director Lambert. There was a suggestion to have a workshop on how to come up with an evaluation process. It was also pointed out so everyone is aware, Bill Lambert was hired by the EDC, not the County Manager. Chair Hernandez mentioned that we could do an annual or semiannual report/presentation to the BOCC on the economic development efforts that we are doing. We could do something like the presentation of the EDA Severance Tax/IDA Mosaic funding.

Doug Jensen made a motion and was seconded by Gene Davis to add these Grand Jury recommendation responses to the IDA Chair's responses and merge them into one document and provide that as the board's response to the Grand Jury recommendations. Motion passed unanimously.

\*A break was taken from 10:21am to 10:35am\*\*

#### ***Discussion on communication/public education strategy***

Keith Rupp was here today and he is from Tucker/Hall. The EDC has entered into a short term contract with them. EDO staff will work on developing an RFP to formally engage a Public Relations firm. One of the many things that Tucker/Hall does is offer advice to senior management and help us tell our story more effectively. They would help the EDC/IDA be more transparent and efficient for the citizens of Hardee County. They would also show outside companies what they would be partnering with and also help us with short term communication strategies. This initial contract is for \$10,000. The EDC marketing budget has \$55,000 for marketing/communications. No action was taken today. This was an informational/introduction presentation.

#### ***Other Business***

Gene Davis said we should consider having some night meetings. Chair Hernandez shared her comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:11pm by Chair Hernandez.