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Fayetteville-Cumberland County Economic Development Corporation

Board of Directors Meeting  
September 18, 2025 / 8:00 AM – 9:30 AM  
201 Hay Street, Suite 401-A  
Fayetteville, NC 28301

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**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Chairwoman Kathryn Cox, Vice Chair Timothy Bryant, Treasurer Bill Hedgepeth, County Chairman Kirk deViere, Mayor Mitch Colvin (online), Ferd Irizarry, Dr. Brian Krakover (online), Joshua Choi (online), Kristie Allen

**Ex-Officios Present:** County Manager Clarence Grier (online)

**Members Absent:** Secretary Carl Manning, Dr. Mark Sorrells, City Manager Doug Hewett

**Staff Present:** Robert Van Geons, Rob Patton, Brittany Odom, Chela Scott, Genesis Merced Rosa

**Visitors/Guests:** ACM Kelly Strickland (online), Teresa McBride (Project Aero)

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**1.0 Call to Order and Welcome**

Chairwoman Kathryn Cox called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

**Quorum:** Yes.

**2.0 Approval of/or Adjustments to the Agenda**

**Action:** Vice Chair Timothy Bryant made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ferd Irizarry.

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor.

**3.0 Organizational Business**

**3.1. Approval of August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Minutes**

**Action:** Vice Chair Timothy Bryant made a motion to approve the August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, minutes. The motion was seconded by Treasurer Bill Hedgepeth.

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor.

**3.2. Approval of the June and July 2025 Financials** - Robert Van Geons discussed items of interest on the June financials, including the payroll budget, with plans to

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decrease costs by changing service providers for FY 2026, and updates on ADP as it relates to state identification items. He then presented the July financials, marking the transition to the new fiscal year. He shared that CORE revenue is starting to come through and that CDF funds are expected to be available in a future report. County Chairman Kirk deViere inquired about the new building rent budget. Robert Van Geons clarified that updates to that budget line may come closer to October as new needs and costs are assessed. Robert Van Geons thanked the City and County for their support of additional funds.

**Action:** Ferd Irizarry made a motion to approve the June and July 2025 financials. The motion was seconded by County Chairman Kirk deViere.

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor.

**October Meeting Date** – Robert Van Geons opened a discussion about the October 2025 Board Meeting date, originally scheduled for October 9<sup>th</sup>. He presented alternate dates to accommodate other FCEDC and Board member commitments. The board discussed their availability and agreed to poll on the matter.

## 4.0 Program of Work Update

**4.1. Project Pipeline** – Robert Van Geons presented the Board with the September infographic. The Board observed the conflicting labor force and unemployment rates for Cumberland County, citing concerns of an artificially lowered unemployment rate due to decreased participation in the labor force. Rob Patton presented the FCEDC Project Pipeline; FCEDC has generated 107 projects and 27 project visits since January 2025.

**4.2. Major Project Developments** – Rob Patton presented updates on projects Nutmeg, IQ, Tribe, Steppenwolf, and Oasis. The project industry sectors include Data Centers, Battery Manufacturing, Steel Tubing, and Printer Components. Rob Patton mentioned a notable increase in foreign direct investment. Kristie Allen inquired about the significant influx of data center-related projects. Robert Van Geons explained that power and water are their main requirements, and being able to accommodate them makes us a viable location. County Chairman Kirk deViere inquired about whether it'd be possible to, from the editorial side, reshape the message around data centers and get ahead of educating the public, noting pushback against data centers across the nation and plausible pushback from small sections of our community as similar projects are brought here. Robert Van

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Geons noted that this was an excellent point, emphasizing that not all data centers are the same.

Robert Van Geons presented the other projects, including the revitalization of the two corridors on Ramsey Street, working with a developer on the I-295 Office Park, and updates on the new military defense-focused development in the Military Business Park on All American Freeway, which will be the extension of the downtown innovation concept. Lastly, he discussed updates on Project Superman with their upcoming City Public Hearing on Monday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, and informed the Board of Project Aero's expected visit during this meeting.

## 5.0 Reports and Analytics

**5.1. Marketing & Communications** – Brittany Odom presented the marketing updates and the August analytics.

### **Marketing & Communications Updates**

Brittany Odom shared that Robert Van Geons and Rob Patton recently attended the following events:

- SIOR Southeast Regional Conference in Lake Oconee, Georgia
- C-UAS & Integrated Protection in Huntsville, AL
- Federal Technology Symposium at FTCC
- IEDC Annual Conference in Detroit, MI

### **Marketing & Communications Ongoing Projects:**

- DCOMP 2025 – Drone Competition October 8-9 at The Range Complex
- Content Creation – Existing Industry, Board Survey, etc.
- Ordering FCEDC Swag Items
- 2026 Event Plan – SOF Week, International Shows, etc.
- Website Updates – Resource Page & SMS Sign-Up
- Events – New Building & FCEDC 10th Anniversary

### **5.2. Upcoming Events:**

- October 2: NCSE Charlotte Industrial Brokers Reception
- October 8-9: DCOMP 2025 – The Range Complex
- October 13 – 15: RES'25 Next Level Leadership Summit – Julep Farms, GA

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- October 15 – 17: RES'25 Senior Executive Symposium – Highlands, NC
- October 20 – 25: Paris/France Trip with Parker Poe
- November 3 – 6: Advanced Economic Development Leadership Class – Kansas City, KS

## **Guest - Project Aero**

At this time, guest Teresa McBride of Project Aero joined the meeting. Teresa informed the board of Project Aero's positive progression and confirmed plans to break ground early next year, should all technicalities advance as expected. She also shared that some of the Project Aero team were here working through its final designs. Guest Teresa McBride departed from the meeting after this.

**5.3. Existing Industry Report** – Chela Scott shared that there were 4 existing industry visits since the August Board Meeting: WePack, Myron, Morty Pride, and Walmart Distribution.

**Progress Towards Annual Goals:** 42 visits through 9/12/25

- Major Private Employers: 11/25
- Manufacturing: 16/30
- Defense: 6/30
- Distribution/Logistics: 10/20
- Operations/Business Services: 9/20

**Updates** - Chela Scott shared progress on Manufacturing Week, which takes place from September 29 through October 3, with four manufacturing partners having confirmed participation: Eaton, MANN+HUMMEL, Myron, and NVR. They will now be hosting plant tours for Cumberland County students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade through High School. She also shared that FCEDC hosted the Commercial Realtors Breakfast, participated in the REC (Regional Energy Collaborative) Support Partners Luncheon, the REC Meeting hosted by FTCC, and held the Transportation & Logistics Committee Meeting at Walmart Distribution. Chela Scott elaborated on Walmart Distribution's operations as two different entities: the warehouse side and the transportation and logistics side, which coexist within the same campus. She shared that they have increased their operation costs by about 5 million USD per year to invest in automation, renovating their facilities as well as climate control, and have already seen a great return on investment on

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employee morale and reduced their turnover rate from 50% to 28.1% with goals to get to 25%.

**5.4. Special Projects Updates** - Chela Scott presented the Board with the special projects updates.

**Black Voices Museum** - Chela Scott shared that FCEDC facilitated small group meetings with our elected officials on August 28<sup>th</sup> and is preparing for the public information session, which will be held on September 30, 2025, at the Segra Stadium AEVEX Veterans Club Lounge. Robert Van Geons added that the final presentations to the City and County will follow and that conversations have been had with the Mayor and County Chairman about delaying these until after the City's elections take place later this year. This would ensure that any new council members are also informed of the project. Robert Van Geons clarified that while it is still possible to present to the County during the original timeframe, it may be beneficial to hold both presentations in close proximity to each other.

**Can Do Performance Financing Program:**

Chela Scott shared the Can Do Performance Financing Program updates. These include recently:

- Partnering with PWC's Economic Inclusion Program and Carolina Small Business Development Fund to host an outreach event: Powering Prosperity, October 22 at 8:30 am in FCEDC's space
- Working to release first draw requests to the current awardees
- Reviewing round 2 applications

**Next Gen Workforce Project** – Robert Van Geons recalled the presentation by Ted Abernathy that the Board attended concerning the ongoing conversation surrounding this project, and shared the progress that has taken place since the Board was last updated. He discussed the day-long retreat with the Research Triangle Foundation and Made In Durham, which presented the workings of their program. Robert Van Geons explained that they were recruiting high-tech, innovative companies, but could not fill the new jobs within their community, and had to supplement with talent from outside, emphasizing the need to build the workforce. He then shared the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering tour that he attended with Mayor Mitch Colvin, County Chairman Kirk deViere, and FTCC President Mark Sorrells. Chairman deViere remarked that it was a great visit with a lot of opportunities and lessons learned.

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## **6.0. Items for Board Discussion** – Robert Van Geons presented the items for Board discussion.

**6.1. Innovation Nexus – 611 W. Russell Move** – Robert Van Geons expressed that there was almost overwhelming interest across state lines from prospective partners in the new building development. He shared information on the four corporate partners interested in having a presence in the new facility, efforts to redesign the plans to ensure good execution, and mentioned state-level interest in a potential partnership, but emphasized the need to make sure this project is executed right first. Additionally, he discussed obtaining renovation quotes, working with attorney Scott Flowers to draft the initial lease agreement, and a joint FCEDC and CDF committee to take place once that initial lease agreement draft is received. Lastly, he shared that Homemaker’s Furniture may be out of the building by the end of the month and that it may be beneficial to celebrate the FCEDC 10-year anniversary in conjunction with the new building’s launch event. Ferd Irizarry added that there was a similar facility already in existence in Virginia, which may be beneficial to visit, and offered to get more information on it. Robert Van Geons agreed and emphasized the need to learn as much as possible to ensure this project is done right.

**6.2. Balanced Scorecard** - Robert Van Geons presented the Board with the current Balanced Scorecard.

## **7.0 Adjournment**

**Action:** Chairwoman Kathryn Cox adjourned the meeting. Vice Chair Timothy Bryant seconded the adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 a.m.

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor.

**Next Meeting: TBD**