

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

**Southern Regional Technical College - The Charles H. Kirbo Regional Center  
2500 E. Shotwell Street, Bainbridge, GA 39818  
Wednesday, December 4, 2019 | 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Compiled by:  
Commissioner's Office  
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Pursuant to notice duly given, the Board of Directors of the Georgia Department of Economic Development met on December 4, 2019, Southern Regional Technical College - The Charles H. Kirbo Regional Center

**Attending Board Members**

1. Mark Bassford
2. David Belle Isle
3. Scott Blackstock
4. Jake Carter
5. Wayne Christian
6. Jaclyn Dixon Ford
7. Ron Garrard
8. Mark Glass
9. Larry Hanson
10. Allen Hodges
11. Eric Johnson
12. Jay Neely
13. Marisa Simpson
14. Mat Swift
15. Steve Syfan
16. June Wood

**Attending Advisors**

1. Daryl Ingram
2. Anne Keiser
3. Sean McMillan
4. Kevin Shea

Commissioner Pat Wilson, filling in for Chairman Neely who was present but had laryngitis, called the GDEcD Board Meeting to order at 2:00 pm and welcomed new members Allen Hodges- Sandersville, and Mat Swift – Columbus.

He then called for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes for the August 29, 2019 meeting

Vote: Motion carried

Resolved: Minutes from the meeting on August 29, 2019 approved without modification

Commissioner Wilson then called on **Andrew Capezuto, General Counsel – GDEcD**, to highlight changes to the by-laws and call for the vote. He then called for a motion to approve the amended By-Laws.

Motion: to approve the changes to the Georgia Department of Economic Development Board of Directors By-Laws by Member June Wood and seconded by member T. Dallas Smith.

Vote: Motion carried

Resolved: GDEcD amended By-Laws were unanimously approved without modification.

Commissioner Wilson called on **Rick McCaskill, Executive Director - Bainbridge-Decatur County Development Authority**, to speak about the exciting things happening in the city of Bainbridge. To say that there is excitement in Bainbridge is an understatement. Taurus USA has just located their North America manufacturing national headquarters here, industry expansions are on the rise, they have four spurs that have 15-20 cars each, and Atlas Packaging, just this morning, announced that they are coming to Bainbridge! Taurus USA has helped bring some new businesses and is very involved in a national sporting shooting complex that is coming soon. The new shooting complex will pull in folks from all the surrounding areas including Florida State University students who have already signed on to use the facility.

Rick says that welders are needed in almost every business that they have now and all new prospects have a concern that there are not enough welders in the area.

Next, Rick introduced **Amanda Glover, Downtown Development Director - City of Bainbridge**, to speak about downtown and all the excitement and changes there. Below are some highlights:

- In 1991, Bainbridge became a Main Street Community
- In the early 2000s, the recession tried to get them down but in 2014 the City came up with a masterplan to get things back on track and in 2017 they were named a Rural Tax District
- Downtown now has 29 downtown residential units, art, events, and the “Brown Bag Music Series”
- The future also has some exciting things in store
  - A dog park
  - Fitness court
  - Eagle Saloon
  - GMA open air venue and playground
  - Willis Park Hotel – a six-room boutique hotel
- Hurricane Michael definitely left some damage that they are still trying to overcome

Next, Commissioner Wilson called on **David Blenker, President and CEO - Taurus USA**, to speak about the decision process that led them to Bainbridge. David said that Taurus has been working with the State of Georgia since 2006 on the very difficult decision about where to move their national headquarters. Taurus is a Brazilian company that was located in Miami, Florida. The move to South Georgia was a decision that David said was embraced by their folks and that has been a great experience. He stated, “Rick changed my life a little bit.” He told the story of how he was in South Georgia hunting at Southwind Plantation during the hurricane. The owner of Southwind overheard David’s conversation to the folks around him and decided to introduce him to Rick McCaskill. After a little conversation about what Taurus was looking for, Rick stated to David that he was, “putting something on the table to keep Florida honest”. And, he did just that. In-depth studies were done and presented to the board and shareholders and the rest is history!

David explained that the locals had their act together from the beginning. They have held hands with Taurus USA through the entire process. They were blown away. He stated that the rumor is that Taurus got kicked out of Miami but the truth is that they were land locked and out of room to grow. Georgia values relationships. From the beginning they worked with folks like Daryl Ingram, Bill Dobbs, and Commissioner Wilson. The city and state were very patient during the very long decision making process and were there when Taurus was ready to move.

Commissioner Wilson made a few comments regarding the process:

1. Do not break into anything in Bainbridge. They all have a gun!
2. Economic development takes a long time. These are major decisions. We value these relationships and recognize that after the announcement the hard part starts. Communities that are doing well have great leadership. Bainbridge and the local legislators never said, “no, we can’t do it”. Congratulations, Rick.

David continued by saying it is definitely a team effort. One example: he told Rick that he could not make the move without a Chick-Fil-A and a Starbucks nearby. The Chick-Fil-A just opened and the Starbucks is not far from being a reality. It is absolutely amazing what you can do when the community wants a company. The space that the State of Georgia has at the SHOT show every year is very important. Also important is the Allies investment in NSSF which helps industries find leads.

Taurus needs suppliers and more companies are coming because they located in Bainbridge. The spec building gets people to come take a look at what Bainbridge has to offer. There is a world class construction company here – they built Taurus which is a state of the art building. David gets on the phone in Rick’s office and makes calls to other companies. It truly is a team effort and wonderful friendships and relationships that are making Bainbridge great. As of now, Taurus USA has 110 on their payroll and will have 200 by year end.

In August 2018, Taurus USA announced they were coming to Georgia. Fifteen months later they were building guns. The first 2,000 guns were just dedicated to the City of Bainbridge. David hand signed 2,000 certificates and released the guns to five local dealers to sell to Bainbridge residents. In just five days, 1,000 of the guns were sold! The guns have been hand delivered by David and his team. They were just named in *Guns & Ammo* as the 2019 Gun of the Year.

Commissioner Wilson turned the discussion over to **Bert Brantley, GDEcD – Chief Operating Officer**, to moderate a panel discussion on regional economic development partnerships. Bert started the discussion by saying that all communities are different in how they want to work together. The panelists today are all part of a team that have had very different ways to work together to make their communities succeed. They are not here to only talk about the good though. Today, they will be honest – they will discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly. Bert asked each panelist to give us background stories from their communities.

Panelists:

**Trip Tollison, President & CEO** - Savannah Economic Development Authority

**Shane Short, Executive Director** - Development Authority of Walton County

**Jason Dunn, Chairman** - Locate South Georgia

**Shane Short – Walton County**, started the discussion and spoke about the success they have recently had in Walton County:

- It all started in 1998 when Walton, Newton, Morgan, and Jasper Counties started a joint development authority
- Baxter announced with a \$1.6-billion-dollar investment in the community and 1,000 employees in high paying jobs
- Facebook took 412 acres in Stanton Springs with a \$42-billion-dollar investment
- In 1.5 years, the JDA’s \$15-million-dollar debt was paid off

- Next, there will be a 1,400-acre solar farm to feed Facebook

**Trip Tollison – SEDA**, explained things in his community

- Thirteen years ago Great Dane was looking to locate in Georgia which put Savannah in competition with Bulloch County. Savannah wasn't the right fit for them and Bulloch County won.
- Bryan County had a 2,600-acre mega site that two companies were looking at. There was panic from the surrounding counties but they decided to all pitch in and realized that a win in any of the surrounding counties, and even a win in Georgia, was a win for each of them. The JDA was created and tied to the Port I-16 area. Counties: Bulloch, Chatham, Bryan, and Effingham.
- There were many mistakes and lots went wrong. In the end, they decided to erase the county lines, market together, do prospect meetings together, and pitch in to help the best county win.
- Together, they have gone from 15 million square feet to 70 million square feet in the last fifteen years

**Jason Dunn – Locate South Georgia**

- Locate South Georgia is a 19-county marketing partnership
- They bounce things off of each other and are considered an information source for the region officials
- They recently started a leadership program in a partnership with Valdosta State University
- They combine sources to do marketing videos to sell their region to prospects looking at South Georgia

The next discussion was how each community keeps things together:

Shane:

- 10% of Jasper doesn't touch the industrial park so there were lots of complaints from the community when they joined the JDA. Now, they are happy to see the growth in another county. They love it that their citizens can work there and the growth isn't in their county but the income comes into their county.
- A JDA tax credit (paper only) – there are discussions in the House of Representatives on how to make it better. The State's role is not to make decisions – locally driven works best.

Trip:

- We all show up, we all celebrate wins, we all learn from our mistakes
- We all have skin in the game but we are happy with any of our counties getting the win. We are a team. There are never any hard feelings.
- Together we all bring different assets to the table. The companies all want to be 20-30 minutes away from the Ports. When we all are in the room together during the prospect visits, we can discuss everything they need to hear in one meeting and come up with a package that wins.
- We created an economic development park with a portion of the penny sales tax funds

Jason:

- Southwest Georgia don't have the funds to speculate. In the rural areas, all industrial parks are regional. The bird in hand theory works best.
- The leadership program we have is open to all South Georgia leaders. There are 40 people per class. They tour seven or eight communities. Business relationships are built.
  - We have a project in Fitzgerald closing next week that was put together by three Locate South Georgia alumni who built a relationship through the class.

Bert talked about the Governor's Rural Strike team. Sites are the State's product. There are state resources to help: workforce studies, assets, and marketing are available. Let us know what we can do to help. Bert urged the board members to get involved and spread the word. Prospects are all looking for the following: land, location, labor, and leadership – it's what makes a community great.

Below are some of the struggles seen in every area:

- Utilities – single source
- County Commissioners, leaders fighting
- Sometimes it's hard to convince leadership to get in when they have already invested so much at home. Elected officials aren't always as eager to team up.

And some of the things they have all learned:

- "Iron sharpens Iron" – working together makes us stronger
- A win in a neighboring county is a win for all. Keep it in the County, the region, the state of Georgia.

Bert wrapped up the discussion: Site selectors tell us that Georgia is the best in the country to work with. Communities that have their act together are great to work with. The Governor's *Made in Georgia* events highlight our counties. In February, you will all be invited to the Made in Georgia rollout at the Capitol. Kia will be adding the Made in Georgia logo stickers to the windshield of the Tellurides.

Next up was Commissioner Wilson to present the Commissioner's Report:

The State of Georgia has so many counties so we must work together. Single communities cannot offer enough. It does take a long time – leaders must lay down their lines and work together.

#### **FILM**

- The film division had another record year in FY19 with 26 feature films, 31 independent films, 214 television series or specials, and 91 commercials for a total of 391 productions. The direct spend of these productions was \$ 2.9 B.
- In the past quarter, we've had projects in more remote parts of the state including Tiger, Lincolnton, Sparta, Thomasville, Dahlonega, and Ben Hill to name just a few. More and more we're seeing projects spread out throughout the state.

#### **GLOBAL COMMERCE**

- Since Governor Kemp took office in January, the Global Commerce team has located 307 projects resulting in \$5.4 billion investment and 19,275 jobs.
  - In this region alone, the team has assisted with the location or expansion of 39 companies, resulting in \$275 million investment and 834 new jobs
- The winners of the fourth annual Georgia Automotive and Emerging Technologies awards were announced on November 18th. The winners included:
  - Novelis (Automotive Innovation)
  - Inalfa Roof Systems (Supplier of the Year)
  - Decostar (Community Impact)
  - Leader of the Year was awarded to Rick Walker, President & CEO of the Georgia Automotive Manufacturers Association.

- Governor Kemp will host these companies at the Capitol on December 20th for a congratulatory photo.

### **CENTERS OF INNOVATION**

- COI continued efforts to support the growth of local innovation ecosystems across the state:
  - The COI team made visits across Georgia – in Woodbury, Augusta, Sandy Springs, Warner Robins, Macon and beyond – to support innovation and entrepreneurship at various panels, visits and conferences
- COI continued efforts in the emerging esports sector including participation in a Georgia Tech forum on Esports and STEM education, meeting with the Metro Atlanta Chamber’s esports Working Group to help define the esports industry and possible economic opportunities, and sponsoring a Georgia Tech study on esports in Georgia to guide future economic development efforts in this growing sector.

### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- The IR division is in welcome mode these past few months, talking with visitors from all across the world – from Korea to Kazakhstan, from Italy to Japan. They supported the Trade division in the monumental undertaking of hosting SEUS-Japan in Savannah, and they put together a cultural training session for tourism and hospitality staff on the coast to better welcome guests from Japan.
- They are currently prepping for a lot of travel over the next 6 months, proposing trips for GDECD and the Governor’s office to represent Georgia and promote our economic opportunities in Germany, Hungary, Israel, and Canada.

### **TRADE**

- SEUS Japan conference
  - At the August board meeting, I mentioned that Georgia would serve as host of the 42nd annual SEUS Japan conference in October, and I’m proud to say that the Trade team pulled together a very successful program in Savannah.
  - As a reminder, Georgia was a founding member of the SEUS Japan Alliance back in 1976. The Savannah event was just the 4th time that Georgia has hosted the conference.
  - The event solidified the importance of Japan as a leading trade and investment partner for Georgia, and strengthened the state’s robust connections with Japanese business executives and government leaders.
  - With support from the International Relations and Global Commerce teams, the conference drew 459 attendees from Japan and across the Southeast.
  - Savannah was an ideal host city, and our guests experienced first-hand all the great things that the city, and our state, have to offer. Now the focus turns to the 2020 conference, which will be held in Tokyo next October.

### **GLOBE Awards**

- This Friday at the Capitol, Governor Kemp and the Trade team will recognize 36 Georgia exporters for expanding into new global markets last year.
  - The sixth annual GLOBE Awards recognize excellence in exporting, and highlight the importance of export growth to our economy.
  - Exporting is critical to Georgia’s global competitiveness, and it sustains and creates jobs for thousands of small businesses each year, in all four corners of the state.
  - 72 percent of this year’s winners are small companies with fewer than 100 employees.

- The Governor will name three “Exporters of the Year” in the small, mid-size and large company categories. And three first-time exporters will also be showcased at the event.
- If you’re interested in more information about Friday’s event, please connect with Mary Waters.

### **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

- Since July, the GDEcD Communications team has issued more than 30 press releases, announcing Georgia Council for the Arts grants, the Georgia Tourism “100 Plates” list, our sixth Top State for Business ranking from Area Development Magazine and the unprecedented seventh consecutive No. 1 ranking from Site Selection Magazine, record-breaking FY19 numbers for our Global Commerce and Film divisions, and project locations across the state – totaling more than 3,000 new jobs announced in Q1.
- In addition to the development of a new creative direction for the business divisions, two new videos have been produced by the Marketing and Communications team: a brief, one and half minute video marking the grand opening of Hanwah Q CELLS, one of the largest solar cell manufacturers in the world, and a new two and half minute life sciences video highlighting Georgia’s strengths in that field. These and many others can be viewed at the department’s website, Georgia.org.

### **RURAL GEORGIA INITIATIVES**

- During this last quarter, the RGI team has stayed on the road through three different regions putting their total number at 123 county meetings across the state. These meetings allow us to listen to communities needs and connect them to the department’s many resources.
- The RGI team also filmed a short video featuring 6 different businesses throughout the state. The video will be released early in the year to show how businesses can thrive in rural Georgia.

### **GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS**

- In October, GCA announced the recipients of the FY20 Vibrant Communities Grant.
  - Eighty-nine eligible applications were reviewed and 72 grants were awarded Grants range between \$1,000 and \$5,000 and a total of \$292,448.00 was awarded.
- Last week, GCA announced the recipients of the FY20 Cultural Facilities Grant. This new grant program supports the construction, renovation or acquisition of a building, or the addition of equipment to support arts programs.
  - The eligible grant requests ranged from \$10,000 - \$75,000.
  - GCA received and reviewed forty-four eligible applicants. Seven grants were awarded ranging from \$21,000 to \$75,000. A total of \$280,000 was awarded.

### **TOURISM**

- While they’ve had a little practice with crisis management over the past couple of years with a rash of weather-related issues, the Tourism team was game-ready when Hurricane Dorian formed back in September. They immediately activated an Explore Georgia Travel Alerts web page, which saw a more than 440% increase in traffic over Hurricane Florence last year. The site was publicized by Governor Kemp, GEMA, FEMA and numerous news outlets.
- Our tourism team hosted the Governor’s Tourism Conference September 8-11 at Great Wolf Lodge with more than 500 people registered. During the conference, the Team recognized the

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10th anniversary of the Tourism Product Development Program, which has assisted more than 70 communities statewide so far with resource teams and grants.

- During the conference, the Tourism team announced its new “Explore Georgia” branding effort which Governor Kemp acknowledged during his remarks at the Governor’s Awards Luncheon on the final day.

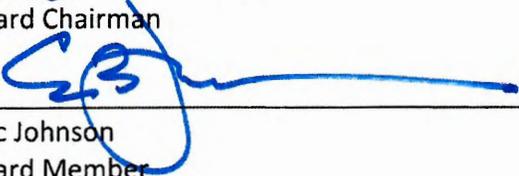
With no further business, Commissioner Wilson adjourned the meeting at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:



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Jay Neely  
Board Chairman



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Eric Johnson  
Board Member