

Aiken Municipal Development Commission

Agenda

VIA ZOOM

February 16, 2021

3:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

1. Approval of Agenda for February 16, 2021.
2. Approval of Minutes for February 2, 2021.
3. Presentation by Dr. Sandra Jordan, USC Aiken Chancellor, Regarding the Status and Potential of the Advance Manufacturing Center and the National Guard Dreamport on the USC Aiken Campus.
4. Update and Status Report Regarding Williamsburg Street Redevelopment Project with Review of Completed Conceptual Plan by Tim O'Briant.
5. Comments by Commission Members.
6. Information and Updates from Staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Aiken Municipal Development Commission Minutes

Via Zoom
February 2, 2021

Present: Keith Wood, David Jameson, Marty Gillam, Philip Merry, Doug Slaughter, and Chris Verenes.

Absent: Stuart MacVean and Tom Williams.

Others Present: Tim O'Briant, Sabina Craig, Sara Ridout, and Tom Hallman.

Mr. Wood, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. He noted the agenda and asked for approval of the agenda. Mr. Jameson moved, seconded by Mr. Slaughter that the agenda be approved as listed.

MINUTES

Mr. Wood asked the members to consider approval of the minutes for the December 8, 2020, meeting. Mr. Gillam moved, seconded by Mr. Slaughter, that the minutes for December 8, 2020, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Wood asked the members to consider approval of the December 15, 2020, minutes. Mr. Gillam moved, seconded by Mr. Merry, that the minutes for December 15, 2020, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Wood asked the members to consider approval of the January 15, 2021, meeting. Mr. Slaughter moved, seconded by Mr. Gillam, that the minutes for January 15, 2021, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

AECOM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Mr. Wood stated the Commission needed to consider approval of the draft AECOM Economic Development Action Plan which was submitted in December, 2020, to the Commission. He said if the Commission approves the plan, then it would be sent to City Council with a recommendation that Council approve the plan as the City's redevelopment plan as required by the S.C. Code Section 31-10-100.

Mr. Wood asked if there was any discussion on the AECOM Plan.

Mr. Slaughter moved, seconded by Mr. Gillam, that the Commission approve the AECOM Economic Development Action Plan and forward the plan to City Council with a recommendation that Council approve the plan as the City's redevelopment plan. The motion was unanimously approved.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Mr. Wood stated he had sent to the Commission members last week a draft of the strategic goals with comments on the discussion between Mr. Jameson, Mr. Verenes, Mr. Wood, Mr. O'Briant, and Dr. Hallman.

Dr. Hallman gave the Commission members a summary of the Strategic Goals document. He said when the Commission members discussed the goals before Christmas, the members agreed that the Commission wanted to develop some separate goals related to economic development for the City. They wanted to use the AECOM report as a foundation for the goals document, and wanted to send the goals to City Council to seek their approval. The Commission would then look at how they might plan specific action to accomplish the broad goals. In the course of creating the goals document, the executive committee that was assigned the task agreed upon four primary goals which are in the document sent to the Commission members.

One of the goals is the Aiken Innovation and Impact District. The second one is related to the findings of the Whiskey Road Corridor report. The third goal is pulled largely from the AECOM report—Target potential areas for redevelopment/investment. The fourth goal was to Make Aiken More Business Friendly. There were also two recommendations that were talked about very broadly and subject to approval by the Commission. One was that the Commission would recommend to City Council that they undertake to find a Project Manager who would oversee the progress on the report of the priority rated projects, and not just those projects associated with the MDC, but all of the items deemed worthy of pursuing by City Council no matter who the champions might be. The second recommendation related to a priority that was not necessarily found in the AECOM report, but deals with a specific plan to market Aiken as an economic development opportunity to prospective investors. He noted that summary was basically the first page of the Strategic Goals document. He noted that on the following pages of the Strategic Goals document are the goals augmented by specific references to the AECOM report related to that particular topic. He said the document shows that the item was something that was highlighted in the AECOM report that was developed by outside experts looking at our community and what might make a difference. He said the goals were not just created, but have some background to them and the page citations in the AECOM report are listed to be able to see where they were referenced in the report.

Mr. Wood noted that while the AECOM report was used as a reference, there are certain areas where they did tweak the language. They added language in some areas and took some out in other areas. The wording is not exactly as the AECOM report is written.

Dr. Hallman stated they did not leave anything out. If anything they added or made the statement clearer.

Mr. Wood asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding the goals and the recommendations.

Mr. Gillam asked about the funding for the Whiskey Road Corridor goal. He noted that funds had been requested for the Whiskey Road Corridor project from the Plutonium settlement funds. He wondered about additional funding for the project.

Mr. Wood responded that at the end of the recommendations there was a request for funds for the MDC.

Mr. O'Briant stated there are other funding sources for the project, including funding from the City and the County with some funds in place. Future funding is to be sought from the Department of Transportation and federal grants. In the MDC planning this was more of an advocacy role and something the MDC would push very hard to see that it is done. The MDC probably will not be paying for road projects.

Mr. Jameson noted there was an article in Sunday's Aiken Standard pointing out that the project has to start with solving drainage issues first. The reason the MDC wants to advocate for the entire project to be completed as quickly as possible is that it opens up hundreds and hundreds of acres of land that would be available for development in a variety of ways. It was noted that the City and County together have about \$17 million set aside for the project, but the total project cost is many more million dollars.

Mr. Wood noted that Goal 4 was not specifically right out of the AECOM report. It is a goal that we wanted to add. It encompasses making sure the City of Aiken is business-friendly. It covers expediting processes, updating regulations, and aspects of marketing Aiken from the economic development standpoint.

The MDC members briefly discussed the goals and recommendations.

Mr. Wood noted that on the last page of the goals and recommendations, the MDC is requesting a \$500,000 commitment from the City to help with funding. The request is for:

Project manager (independent contract)	\$ 75,000
Site acquisition pool (options and or purchase)	\$250,000
Economic Development marketing	\$ 50,000
Work Force development/Business incubator	\$ 50,000
Professional services (appraisal, engineering, legal, Concept plan, market, and feasibility research)	\$ 75,000

The MDC members then discussed the requested funding and how the funding would be used for the projects. It was noted that the request was intended to be an annual appropriation from the City. Regarding the Project Manager, it was pointed out that if the Project Manager is successful and able to implement most or all of the projects in the AECOM report, that investment would be good. It was also pointed out that the Project Manager would not just be managing the City's activities or the MDC's activities, but would be managing the activities by the higher education institutions, the Aiken Corporation, ADDA, the Chamber of Commerce, Aiken County Public Schools, etc. It would be an umbrella position for someone to be a true leader to be able to go speak to all the organizations and lead the effort. It was pointed out the idea is for the Project Manager to be an individual independent contract, not a person with an individual corporation. The person would be critical for implementation of everything that needs to be done.

Mr. Gillam moved that the MDC request \$500,000 from the City of Aiken for funding to help carry out the goals and objectives of the MDC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Merry.

Mr. Wood asked if the Commission wanted to have one motion to ratify the Goals and Recommendations document along with the funding request.

Mr. Gillam amended his motion to include that the Strategic Goals and Recommendations document be approved, including the request to the City of Aiken for funding of \$500,000 to help carry out the goals and objectives of the MDC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Merry. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Wood stated that a letter would be written to the Mayor with a copy to City Council members and the City Manager submitting the Strategic Goals and Recommendations to the City, including the request for funding.

Mr. Wood stated he wanted to thank Dr. Hallman for his efforts and time in helping to draw up the Strategic Goals and Recommendations document for the MDC.

Mr. Wood stated that perhaps the Commission at the next meeting could consider their priorities as far as tackling the goals and objectives.

Dr. Hallman stated the focus had been rearranged since the MDC members went through the survey on the AECOM report. He asked that the MDC members look at the Goals before the next meeting and indicate where they would like to be engaged and indicate an A and B preference. He asked that they let the Chairman know their preference. He noted that as we think how we might begin and implement this action planning stage, that would give us an idea of where some leadership might come on each of these goals.

COMMENTS BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Jameson stated he felt the Commission was making good progress. We are heading in the right direction. We have a group dedicated to Aiken's future.

Mr. Wood stated for a future meeting, he felt the Commission needs to get an update from the City Manager on the Plutonium Settlement Funds. He also noted that the Commission has a request outstanding for an update on one of the projects in the city.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Mr. O'Briant noted that a schedule of future meetings of the MDC for the year had been included in the agenda packet. He asked that the Commission members review the schedule before the next meeting. He pointed out that the Commission has a lot of work ahead. A lot of time had been spent setting goals. He noted that attention to the meeting schedule will be very important. He asked that the members review the schedule and see if there are any issues with any of the dates so changes could be made if needed.

It was pointed out that July 6, 2021, could be a problem, depending on when people are away for the July 4 holiday.

It was decided to eliminate the July 6, 2021, meeting date.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Wood stated the Aiken Municipal Development Commission needs to meet in Executive Session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(2) of the South Carolina Code to discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body. Specifically, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will discuss matters regarding property in the downtown area.

Mr. Verenes moved, seconded by Mr. Jameson, that the MDC go into executive session to discuss the matters stated by Mr. Wood. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Commission went into executive session at 4:10 P.M.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Merry, seconded by Mr. Gillam that the Commission come out of executive session. The motion was unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 P.M.

Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk