



WATAUGA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Tentative Meeting Agenda

Watauga Economic Development Commission

12:00 PM, October 16, 2025

Beech Mountain Club

114 Clubhouse Road

Beech Mountain, NC

1. Lunch provided by the Town of Beech Mountain and Beech Mountain Club
2. Call to Order
3. Welcome
4. Public comments
5. Review of September 18, 2025 meeting minutes
6. Lees McRae College update: Mr. Blaine Hansen, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
7. Update of current activities
8. Consideration of November and December meetings
9. Other
10. Adjourn

WATAUGA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

September 18, 2025

Members present: Bob Bertini, Robin Miller, Suzanne Livesay, Pete Gherini, Tim Hodges, Lee Rankin, Christine Hendren

Staff present: Joe Furman

The Watauga Economic Development Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce conference room. Chair Pete Gherini called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM and welcomed those in attendance.

Public comments: none.

The minutes of the August 21, 2025 meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Mr. Bertini, seconded by Ms. Miller.

Lindsay Sullivan, Health Strategist at AppHealthCare presented information about the STABLE workplaces program, a joint effort between AppHealthCare, the Boone Chamber and other volunteers. STABLE workplaces is an acronym for Staff Training and Business Leadership for Evolving Workplaces. The group that organized the program began meeting in 2022 and made good progress but Hurricane Helene caused the progress to slow. The mission of the program is to provide resources to local businesses that typically do not have HR departments in a variety of areas such as mental health needs and family friendly practices. Promotion of the NC Family Friendly Workplaces certification is being incorporated into the program's offerings. AppHealthCare and Chamber staff will continue to grow the program and promote it. It is hoped that sufficient funds can be raised to support a staff person. Discussion and Q&A followed. Mrs. Sullivan was asked to name the top few issues for which employers have requested assistance. The far and away most requested assistance was mental health of employees, followed by conflict resolution, business resiliency, and access to HR expertise. Mr. Bertini suggested those be the focus areas.

Mr. Furman reported on the training cohort regarding Family Friendly Workplaces being provided by NC Family Forward that was mentioned by Mrs. Sullivan. The Chamber along with AppHealthCare, UNC Health Appalachian, Appalachian State University, The Children's Council, and Oasis are the Watauga team participants. The expected outcomes are that each organization participating in the training will be certified and that the team will gain training on promoting the program to local businesses. As mentioned, this will be incorporated into STABLE Workplaces.

Mr. Furman provided updates of ongoing activities: Career Pathways partnership with Caldwell County and CCC&TI, now named RISE Caldwell-Watauga and introduced Tara Brossa as the

newly hired Executive Director; the recently opened 4th round of applications the Chamber Foundation Business Resiliency Grants; and the new Watauga Forward page on the Chamber's web site that is dedicated to disaster preparedness, recovery and other resources for local businesses as well as visitors.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2025, in Beech Mountain: Dr. Lee King, President of Lees McRae College will be the guest.

No further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:57 PM.

Joseph A. Furman, Secretary to EDC

Approved by EDC