

April 17, 2015 – Greenville/Spartanburg BMW Plant

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met in a special meeting at 7:00 a.m. on April 17, 2015, at the Randolph Community College Archdale Campus, 110 Park Dr., Archdale, for an information-gathering trip to Greenville-Spartanburg, SC. Commissioners Kemp, Lanier, Haywood and Allen were present. Commissioner Frye was absent. Also present were County Manager Hal Johnson, Finance Officer Will Massie, Public Works Director Paxton Arthurs, Planning Director Jay Dale, and Clerk to the Board Amanda Varner.

Others present were RCC President Dr. Bob Shackelford, RCC V.P. Workforce Development Elbert Lassiter; Randolph County Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Gainey, Assistant Superintendent Marty Trotter, and School Board Chair Todd Cutler; Randolph County Economic Development President Bonnie Renfro and Existing Business/Industry Coordinator Kevin Franklin. Attending from the City of Greensboro were Mayor Nancy Vaughan, Council Members Jamal Fox, Sharon Hightower, and Nancy Hoffman; City of Greensboro Economic and Small Business Development Manager Kathi Dubel, City Manager Jim Westmoreland, and City Attorney Tom Carruthers. Guilford County Manager Marty Lawing. Representing the Piedmont Triad Partnership was Jed McMillian; representing the Bryan Foundation was Attorney Garrett Walker; representing Greensboro Economic Development was Cyndi Dancy.

Recess

At 7:05 a.m., the Board recessed the meeting to travel to South Carolina in multiple vehicles.

Regular Meeting Resumed

At 10:15 a.m., the Board returned to regular session at Zentrum, the BMW Museum, located on the BMW Campus, 1400 Hwy 101 S. Greer, SC 29651. Executive VP of Spartanburg Economic Futures Carter Smith welcomed everyone and introduced BMW employee Sky Foster, Manager of Corporate Communications, who had been with the company since its location opening. Ms. Foster presented a two-minute video about the manufacturing process at the site. She talked about the vehicles they manufacture, the process, as well as the programs the company offers its employees. She said the plant is set for another \$1 billion expansion. They manufacture 390,000 cars a year. It has been estimated that 37,777 jobs have been added to the state of SC since the BMW plant was built. A lot of that was support industry. She also talked about the education programs established by BMW with the local high school and colleges that begin in the classroom and have hands-on career path involvement. The college level program targets engineering and operations management development. It is formulated in conjunction with each four-year college in the area.

The plant also focuses on sustainability. Panels located on the property collect solar energy. Methane gases are piped from local landfills through pipes which BMW installed. They also have their own recycling programs.

An overview of BMW location & growth was given by Greenville Chamber President Ben Haskew and Mr. Smith. GIS maps of the footprint before acquisition of property, after building of the BMW facility, and a current aerial view were shown.

Mr. Smith explained the 1,300-acre footprint was very rural with a few housing developments but mostly farmland. He said the farmers and homeowners commented that they sold for the betterment of their community. They knew what it could mean for many who were seeking jobs.

David Britt, Chairman, Economic Development Committee and Spartanburg County Councilman discussed the local government perspective. He said the area had lost over 25,000 jobs in the 80's due to textile industries moving overseas. BMW currently has around 9000 employees, Mr. Britt said, but what they've done for the area is far better than the jobs provided. They have given citizens pride, confidence, and self-worth. The community gets involved with businesses looking to move to the area. They make them feel welcome and like part of the community. The companies then invest in the community financially and emotionally. Mr. Britt said, "Team work makes the dream work."

Mr. Britt and Smith discussed the incentives given, site acquisition process, ownership of the property, and infrastructure partnerships. Owners of the property are SC Ports Authority, the County and BMW.

John Lummus, President/CEO Upstate Alliance (Regional Economic Council) added that this whole process took regional collaboration and emphasized the teamwork of everyone. He said marketing and branding your area is key.

Spartanburg Community College President Henry Giles discussed workforce readiness. They traveled to other BMW plants and headquarters to learn and train on equipment that would be used. He said they prepared potential workers by setting up pre-employment training and basic education. All branches of government were involved in the preparation of employees. The county leased a building for training and the state committed money for the equipment to train with. BMW had 85,000 applicants that lived within a fifty mile radius that included seven counties. Mr. Giles said all of the colleges have the same common curriculum so that each graduate has the same level of training.

Dr. Darrell Owings, District Six Superintendent/Spartanburg County Schools spoke about the system's "academic movement" and investment in this program. They told BMW they could give them an educated and trainable workforce. They have set goals to have every student capable of attending a two or four year college. The ACT is now given in the 9th grade to assess the need for remedial education for students who need it. They have begun training as early as the elementary level giving students a chance to see what is available and maybe find out what they are interested in as a future career. He said the jobs at BMW are all sophisticated and every employee is at least a high school graduate. He concluded by saying that businesses and citizens are all working together to improve education.

Mr. Britt said that "Do you have a job ready workforce?" is the primary question that has been asked by companies looking to locate and the reason the area's focus on education. He said the level of skillsets is important.

Commissioner Haywood asked what the impact has been on medical care. Mr. Smith replied that BMW has its own medical staff and pharmacy. The applied technology center has had the

most growth in the medical field and they attribute that to the impact of new businesses. They now have the number one heart center and a state of the art cancer center in the area.

Commissioner Allen inquired how the concerns of the citizens were handled. Response was that BMW committed in the incentives package to hire only employees who had lived in the area for at least two years and within a fifty-mile radius of the plant. Their incentives packages to any new company seeking assistance are performance based.

County Manager Hal Johnson asked if there were any particular problems related to adjusting county zoning or land issues at public hearings. Mr. Smith advised that zoning/land use planning was not an issue and that the only standards required were building setbacks and buffers.

Mr. Smith said that having an intermodal inland port with rail (SC Port Authority), as part of the site, allows shipments from site to ocean port in one day. And having airports nearby has been a benefit to the companies which have located there.

Mr. Garrett Walker, Bryan Foundation Attorney asked if there was anything they would have done differently. Mr. Britt said they didn't expect the area to explode and grow as it has. They would have found a way to get their General Assembly to be more involved and would have pushed faster for road infrastructure.

In conclusion, each encouraged unity to be shown from every aspect.

Recess

At 1:50 p.m., the Board recessed the meeting to travel.

Adjournment

At 5:35 p.m., there being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Phil Kemp

Arnold Lanier

Stan Haywood

David Allen

Amanda Varner, Clerk to the Board