



DeSoto County

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Thursday, January 29, 2026

8:30 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Neuhofer called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Assistant County Administrator Justin Smith sat in on the meeting.

Mr. Neuhofer recognized Arcadia Assistant City Administrator Carl McQuay as being in attendance in place of Arcadia City Administrator Beth Carsten, and asked it be noted in the January meeting's minutes.

Present: Janet Harvin, Lynn Shelfer, Andrew Neuhofer, Addison Reesor and Akos Jankura

Absent: Asena Mott, Debbie Wertz and Beth Carsten

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for November 13, 2025

EDAC members reviewed the minutes from the November 13, 2025, meeting. Ms. Harvin made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Reesor seconded. All approved.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Development Update

Economic Development Director Sondra Guffey stated that the Board of County Commissioners had approved a biosolids processing facility called Osceola Organics at a recent BOCC meeting. The location is off State Road 70, west of town. The facility aims to use hurricane wood debris and biosolids to create fertilizer.

She referenced resident concerns involving odor, but added that Commissioners visited Osceola facility and nearby residents reported no noticeable smell. Commissioner approval included conditions, such as defined operating hours and ability to shut down for non-compliance.

Ms. Guffey discussed the County Commissioners recent approval of the phase one improvement plant for the Bridlewood development, which includes approximately 460 residential units. The development was originally approved in 2019 for a total of about 1,500 homes, as well as commercial and industrial components. The development will have its own wastewater treatment plan.

Mr. Reesor provided recent updates in downtown Arcadia, including Broken Spur's

purchase of Oak Street Deli, the "Pink Building" adding small tenants -- Dragon's Den Bookstore and Florida Farmhouse Coffee Shop expansion -- in former Cowboy Corner location, potential openings in the red brick building on Polk, ongoing building work, and the Historic Heard Opera House being under new management.

There was also discussion about Big T Tires opening, and RMZ Realty moving to a new location on the corner of State Roads 70 and 17.

Presentation by Wilson Trilha of DCIP Group

Wilson Trilha discussed the DCIP Group data center and power generation redevelopment project. On N.E. Roan Street, DCIP has purchased a deactivated power plant, previously associated with Duke Energy, and surrounding land, to operate a hyperscale data center.

He continued that DCIP has proposed a resilient, hyperscale, behind-the-meter data center powered by natural gas, aiming for 2026–2027 milestones, robust workforce training, and ancillary industrial growth without burdening the local grid.

The architecture allows for economic development without sacrificing grid reliability, public trust, and noise and traffic impact. Plans also detail a minimized environmental footprint.

Presentation by IBT Group Representative Priya Ahluwalia

Representatives of IBT Group detailed broadband strategies, funding and other efforts in DeSoto County. Representative Guido Dominguez stated that IBT's current deployment includes fully underground fiber aiming to connect over 4,500 locations in Arcadia and southeast Arcadia. The company has focused on infrastructure access and digital literacy and adoption programs, including classes on AI tools, social media, digital marketing, telehealth, and cybersecurity. Those classes are free for DeSoto residents at a variety of local venues.

Representative Priya Ahluwalia discussed the different workshops and programs IBT has provided and plans to offer for free for residents, as well as other methods to educate residents and local business owners.

Representatives stated that IBT remains committed to long-term fiber network operation and expansion with significant funding and partnerships, adding that coverage improvement and adoption are a priority; however, GIS collaboration needed.

Presentation by Taylor Jones, DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce

DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Taylor Jones provided an update on Chamber activities and its 100-year anniversary. She said that over the years, the Chamber has evolved from a visitor-center model to streamlined marketing and networking. Some networking efforts include early bird breakfasts, noontime networks, evening exchanges, ribbon cuttings, and groundbreakings.

Ms. Jones also discussed Chamber signature events, such as the Tater Hill Fun Shoot, the Chamber Ball, Christmas Parade and Christmas Card Lane.

She added that the chamber is expanding networking and training offerings and launching an Alumni Hall of Fame with a public event on March 20.

EDAC Membership and Election of New Chair

Ms. Guffey provided an EDAC membership update, noting resignations of Jacqueline Wolcott, Eric Bautista, Mac Martin and the passing of Robert Womack.

Ms. Guffey noted that Ms. Jones was recommended for appointment by the Board of County Commissioners to join EDAC, adding that there is a need for additional members.

She added that Chair Wertz is stepping down from the Chair position due to being an elected official.

Ms. Harvin recommended Mr. Neuhofer as the new Chair. All approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

n/a

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Guffey was asked about land development regulations in the County.

She stated that County Commissioners approved a motion to hire Central Florida Regional Planning Council (grant-funded) to review the comprehensive plan, adding that the review will begin soon. The public will be notified of the meetings.

Committee members proposed inviting CFRPC to present progress at the next EDAC meeting.

Chair Neuhofer discussed a new toll highway corridor project proposed by the Florida Department of Transportation. He stated that FDOT held three public meetings highlighting plans to extend a new toll highway from east of town: Phase 1 from Highway 70 to Highway 66, and Phase 2 from 66 to 98.

Chair Neuhofer noted concerns over impacts to agricultural land, stating that more information needs to be circulated and public comments encouraged at future meetings, as well as a recommendation to the County Commission from the EDAC committee. Members may review FDOT materials, submit comments, and consider a formal recommendation to the County Commission.

STAFF COMMENTS

Staff distributed a flyer for the County's monthly newsletter, which includes staff's "What's Going Up" series, encouraging EDAC members to sign up for the newsletter.

Ms. Guffey discussed the 2nd Annual Economic Development Summit planned for March 26 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center. Sponsored by Florida Power and Light, the event includes Keynote Speak Shellie Phelps, featured speaker Peter Justen, as well as additional speakers and panels. Chamber, EDAC and community participation was encouraged.

Ms. Guffey and Assistant County Administrator Justin Smith detailed their recent trip to Tallahassee for Rural County Days, adding that the DeSoto booth showcased the county with a

rural identity theme aligning with “The Land Remembered” book and future filming.

Mr. Smith stated that the booth was highly visited among around 39 counties. Joshua Citrus juices and rodeo centennial materials were also major draws. He added that the booth's authentic barn items, used as decorations, resonated with visitors. County giveaways, such as Florida Wild bucket hats and cowbells, were also popular.

ADJOURN

Chair Neuhofer made a call to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 a.m. Ms. Harvin made the motion to adjourn, Mr. Reesor seconded. All approved.

NOTE: For quasi-judicial matters, any party desiring a verbatim record of the proceeding of this hearing for the purpose of an appeal is advised to make private arrangements for the production of a

record and anyone wishing to present documents or other written evidence to the Board must provide

eight (8) copies of the written material. If special accommodations are required in accordance with

the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals should contact the County Administrator’s Office by

calling 863-993-4800 at least forty-eight hours prior to the hearing.