



DeSoto County

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes - Final

Thursday, March 19, 2026

8:30 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Serving as Chair in Mr. Neuhofer's absence, Ms. Wertz called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Present: Beth Carsten, Addison Reesor, Akos Jankura, Taylor Jones and
Debbie Wertz

Absent: Asena Mott, Janet Harvin, Andrew Neuhofer and Lynn Shelfer

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for January 29, 2026, meeting

Committee members reviewed the minutes from the January 29, 2026 EDAC meeting. Mr. Jankura made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Jones seconded. All approved.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Election of Vice Chair

Committee members discussed electing a new Vice Chair for EDAC. Ms. Carsten made a motion to nominate Ms. Wertz as Vice Chair, Mr. Jankura seconded. All approved.

Discussion of EDAC Applicant Justin Fussell

Committee members reviewed an application from Justin Fussell to become an EDAC member to fill the financial services seat. Ms. Carsten made a motion to approve Mr. Fussell's application, Mr. Jankura seconded. All approved.

Mr. Fussell's application advanced and will be submitted for review by the DeSoto County Commissioners for final approval.

Development Update

Ms. Guffey provided an update on the Oak Stone residential development along Kings Highway, adding that there are addition active family lot splits but none will serve as economic drivers.

She stated that there has been an increase in retail and restaurant interest, adding that two major chains have inquired about property owned by Dr. David Stevenson on East State Road 70 but there is hesitancy due to State Road 31 alignment uncertainty.

Ms. Guffey added that there was also hotel developer interest for the property which could add bed tax revenue and potential convention capacity.

Ms. Guffey stated that there is industrial-zoned land near Hull and Wood Street on US 17 (near A Plus Environmental) being marketed with Florida Power and Light support,

adding that grants are being explored to extend water/sewer. The site is also near a lightly used railroad.

Ms. Carsten stated that as the historic Arcadia City Hall nears completion in its renovations and rebuild, the city's current facility, the Margaret Way building, will have lease options available for businesses. She said that the YMCA will begin redevelopment of the historic Speer Center in Arcadia.

Ms. Carsten also provided updates regarding paving on Oak Street, Pine and South Volusia., including underground utilities and storm water improvements for other city streets.

Beautification Efforts on Major Access Pathways into the County, City.

Ms. Guffey presented a new Beautification and Litter Abatement project the County's Economic Development and Tourism Department is pursuing.

The project focuses on corridor cleanup, proposing a city-county-chamber partnership or perhaps an adopt-a-highway-style program. Members expressed an interest in engaging Florida Department of Transportation, local businesses, Rotary, and civic groups to participate.

Members suggested looking into neighboring counties' programs, as well as Arcadia Main Street's successful monthly cleanups.

Overall, there was broad support for a coordinated beautification program leveraging partnerships, volunteers, and proactive enforcement.

Presentation by Dr. David Stevenson

Dr. Stevenson did not attend the meeting so he was unable to present. This item was pulled.

2nd Annual Economic Development Summit Presentation

Economic Development staff presented details for the DeSoto Economic Development Summit planned for March 26, 2026 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center. The event will feature a variety of speakers, including regional business and community representatives, and more, as they discuss making economic development decisions that have a lasting impact. Ms. Carsten agreed to provide an opening speech regarding the city of Arcadia and its recent, ongoing and new developments.

Bots, Bolts and Boots Suncoast Remake Learning Days presentation

Economic Development staff presented details for a career fair event, hosted by the Economic Development department, called Bots, Bolts & Boots: Career Discovery Event. The event is to be held on April 30, 2026 at the Turner Agri-Civic Center as part of the 2026 Suncoast Remake Learning Days. The free event will showcase skilled, high-wage career opportunities, along with hands-on displays, people in the field, and live heavy duty and work truck displays.

YMCA Summer Camp at Turner Center Exhibit Hall

Ms. Guffey informed EDAC members that the YMCA will be renting the Turner Center Exhibit Hall and Barns for an upcoming multiple-week summer camp. With support from the Early Learning Coalition, cost is expected to be between \$5 to \$30; however, no child will be turned away and meals will be included.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The EDAC Agenda was adjusted to take public comments earlier due to scheduling.

During public comments, Wilson Trilha of DCIP Group and his team presented details regarding the company's data center and power generation redevelopment project on N.E. Roan Street where they have purchased a deactivated power plant, previously associated with Duke Energy, and surrounding land, to operate a hyperscale data center.

Mr. Trilha stated that the initial 30–34 acres is moving to DeSoto County Commission review and rezoning consideration at an upcoming BOCC meeting.

Ms. Wertz asked Mr. Trilha to explain the difference between modern data center design versus older models.

He stated that modern centers enable a closed-loop water cooling system where water is recycled and not discharged, adding that compliance with air and water permitting under oversight of the water management district. Potential water sources include reclaimed water, rainwater, and existing wells.

Mr. Trilha stated that ongoing water consumption is expected to be limited due to the closed-loop design.

Community concerns noted regarding aquifer usage, historical large-volume agricultural pumping, and past “per-minute” aquifer charges by SWFWMD.

Steve Fussell, a member of Trilha's team, added that historical citrus irrigation pumped large volumes of water; however, many such wells are now idle.

The projected data center water use presented as lower than historic agricultural use.

Members questioned if there would be an increase in traffic in area due to the data center?

Mr. Trilha stated that the construction phase will increase truck traffic but operations are expected to be quiet.

He added that the data center will create significant tax revenue for the county, citing an estimated “\$30 million” over time tied to property value growth and expansion, not upfront.

Mr. Trilha clarified that no incentives or tax breaks have been requested.

Mr. Trilha explained projected staffing and job availability at the data center, adding that phase one staffing is estimated around 25 employees; however, there is the potential for 150-250 jobs depending on build-out.

Committee members asked, "What is a data center?"

Mr. Trilha described a data center as a secure, closed warehouse with fire systems and computing equipment, adding that Florida has around 120 data centers.

He also addressed the misconceptions and health concerns associated with data centers.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mr. Jankura stated that he had recently purchased and opened a Re/Max Realtor Franchise and is planning a grand opening in the medical district of Arcadia, FL.

STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Guffey presented upcoming events hosted by the DeSoto County Economic Development department.

ADJOURN

The meeting was called to adjourn at 9:47 a.m. Mr. Jankura made the motion to adjourn, Ms. Carsten 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.