

Technology & Entrepreneurship Advisory Board
Minutes – January 15, 2026

1. Call to Order: Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm.
2. Roll Call: Chairman Richardson; Directors Boman, Pearson, Rhoades, Ritchie, and Kennedy were present.

Director Rodriguez was absent.

Staff: Holly Wharton – Economic Development Director, and Joni Ary – Recording Clerk

3. Citizens with Input – None
4. Guests and Speakers – None

5. New Business

- a. Approve December 18, 2025, Minutes

Director Pearson motioned to approve as presented; Director Bowman seconded; all in favor, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- b. Approve December 2025 Financials

Director Rhoades motioned to approve as presented; Director Boman seconded; all in favor, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- c. 2026 Startup Summit Program Planning

Ms. Wharton provided the Perry Startup Summit event program flyer scheduled for February 19th and 20th. The flyer has the summit schedule, and the other flyer is for sponsors interested in sponsoring the event. Ms. Wharton stated that the City will promote the event on the City's website, social media, and podcast.

Ms. Wharton stated that the Board's next scheduled meeting is on February 19th and would recommend cancelling the meeting. All members concurred with the recommendation to cancel the next scheduled meeting on February 19th. The Board's next meeting will be on March 19th.

- d. 2026 Speaker Series Program Planning

Ms. Wharton stated that she reached out to USDA regarding participating in the speaker series program, but it was not available. After board discussion, alternatives would be Georgia Grown (agriculture), Mr. David Grossnickle (service-based businesses), and Macon Bacon (service-based business). Ms. Wharton stated she will work on Georgia Grown for the upcoming Speaker Series in March and will work on a service-based series

for the future. All members concurred to proceed with Georgia Grown for the Speaker Series in March.

6. Staff Items

- a. Monthly Updates – Ms. Wharton advised that the Startup Support Center (SSC) entrepreneur training program report shows low user usage and recommended discontinuing services and providing users with alternative free services. Director Ritchie motioned to discontinue the SSC program and provide users with free services; Director Rhoades seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Wharton stated that she is still working with Spark Macon on the Lemonade Stand for the City's Summer Breeze event on May 15th. Chairman Richardson stated he will reach out to a member of the Spark Macon board for their support with the City's event. Target participants would be from 5th – 8th grade, and possibly charging participants to ensure participation. Ms. Wharton has spoken with the Health Department, which has offered to attend and help the entrepreneurs learn more about the services it provides. The Board offered their enthusiasm to help with the teams, possibly two Saturdays leading up to the event, with the winner keeping all money raised and possibly a trophy for the participants.

7. Member Items

Director Rhoades stated there would be a ribbon-cutting event for the Gear Lab at the end of April.

8. Adjourn: there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.