

# *Economic Development Commission*

*The County Commissioners of Kent County*

*400 High Street*

*Chestertown, MD 21620*

**January 3, 2018**

Commission Members Present: Rob Thompson, Aaron Bramble, Kate Gray, Jim Luff, Tracey Williams, Mary Ford, and Bob Jacob

Commission Members Absent: Cindy Genther and Shreyas Suresh

Also in Attendance: Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology; Tammy Edwards, Senior Business Development Representative, Maryland Department of Commerce

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2017, meeting. On motion by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the December 6, 2017, meeting.

Ms. Williams introduced Paolo Fezzi, President, Creafill Fibers to share expansion plans. Creafill was built in 1995 and became independent in 2001. Creafill has been investing in the facility for the past 15 years. Creafill's expansion represents a \$2.5 million investment in buildings, with loading docks, and railroad access. The two biggest challenges Creafill faces is talent and access to raw materials. Creafill received concept and preliminary approval from the Planning Commission and is expected to break ground in May 2018. Mr. Fezzi shared that every interaction with the County has been very supportive. Mr. Thompson asked if the expansion would create additional jobs. Creafill has and will continue to add skilled workers, i.e. quality control and mechanics. Creafill is International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and British Retail Consortium (BRC) certified, exporting to 18 countries. Creafill's customers look for these certifications that represent commitment to quality. Mr. Luff asked about the installation of the rail spur. Mr. Fezzi shared that the goal is to decrease the amount of trucks on the road, one rail car is equal to four trucks. Ms. Williams asked what the specific challenges are regarding workforce. Mr. Fezzi shared that work ethic was the issue, if someone has a good ethic, anything is possible.

Mr. Boone addressed rumors shared at the January meeting. Mr. Jacob shared that he is hearing residents are not being connected, residents are not getting calls back from ThinkBig, lines have been run to Great Oak and they cannot get service, etc. Mr. Boone explained that the County only has a relationship with the dark fiber provider. Mr. Boone shared that ThinkBig is continuing construction in Kentmore Park and is committed to serving Kent County businesses and residents. Ms. Williams asked when information will be shared that demonstrates the cost savings potential to the anchor sites that are outside of the County responsibility.

Mr. Boone shared that the IT department has been looking into cell service issues downtown. Verizon Smart Cities initiative installs distributive antennas/hotspots/4G amplifiers,

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on top of lamp posts. IT has identified 120 throughout the County including those in Chestertown. The upgraded lighting reduces the power consumption by approximately 50%.

Ms. Williams shared Site Selection magazine's list of What Matters Most: Site Selectors' Most Important Location Criteria.

1. Workforce skills
2. Transportation infrastructure
3. Utilities (cost, reliability)
4. State and local tax scheme
5. Land/building prices and supply
6. Quality of live
7. Workforce development
8. Ease of permitting and regulatory procedures
9. Incentives
10. Higher education resources

Ms. Williams gave an overview of the More Jobs for Marylanders 2.0 proposal announced by Governor Hogan. Kent County would receive additional incentives for manufacturing businesses, the proposal is to increase the amount of funding for the program, and each county can identify industries that are important to their economy and offer incentives.

It is important for Kent County, Maryland, to market itself. A banner ad has been placed on [www.radiomiddletown.com](http://www.radiomiddletown.com) for a couple of months, when the banner is clicked on they are directed to information about the quality of life in Kent County, Maryland. Two promotions will play on WKHS; one about the quality of life and one about the quality of opportunities. Ads have been designed by Platinum PR for Site Selection and Doing Business in Maryland 2018. The Kent County, Maryland profile sheet designed by Victoria Luff, KRM Development was shared. Ms. Gray shared that the profile was based on the welcome presentation, just jazzed up and more succinct.

A draft of The Impact of Resource Based Industries on the Maryland Economy being done by BEACON has been shared internally. Resource based industries include agriculture, forestry, mining, natural gas, seafood and aquaculture, and supporting industries. The numbers for agriculture in this report are very similar to the numbers retrieved from the Emsi software for the 2017 Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Mr. Luff asked about Senator Rosepepe's visit to the Kent County High School. Ms. Williams shared that Senator Rosepepe toured the CTE classrooms and asked lots of questions of the teachers and students. Kent County has the highest percentage of CTE high school grads in Maryland at 70.3%. Senator Rospepe shared the value of youth apprenticeships.

Ms. Williams shared that Kent County Public Schools has worked with Maryland Business Roundtable for about eight years. The school system will have a next generation scholars position, which works with grades 7, 8 and 9 that are first generation college students.

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Kent County's graduating classes was comprised of 67% first time college attendees in 2016 to 64% in 2017.

Mr. Luff shared his understanding that Queen Anne's County had issued a request for proposal for an Impact Study of the Northern County as a result of the 301 bypass. Mr. Luff questioned why Kent County was not invited to participate. Mr. Luff will follow up with Commissioner Jack Wilson. Mr. Luff proposed asking Queen Anne's to offer an alternative to include Kent County or contacting the chosen consultant on our own. After a discussion about water and sewer capacity in the Millington area, it was concluded that this is a complex and complicated issue, and the dialogue continues between the County and the Town of Millington.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Ms. Williams, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:16 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, February 7, 2018, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams  
Coordinator