

Economic Development Advisory Board

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street

Chestertown, MD 21620

January 6, 2016

Board Members Present: Bob Ampula, Kate Gray, Aaron Bramble, Cindy Genter, Bob Jacob, Dan MacLeod, and Jim Luff

Board Members Absent: Shreyas Suresh

Also in Attendance: William Short, Commissioner, Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC), Shelley Herman, County Administrator, Bill Ingersoll, Town Manager, JR Nicholson, Chestertown Marina, Chris Cerino, Mayor, Kay MacIntosh, Economic Development and Marketing Coordinator, and Manager, Arts & Entertainment District, Town of Chestertown, Tom Rider, Business Services Supervisor, Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (DLLR)

At 3:00 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order.

Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the December 2, 2015 meeting. On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Ms. Gray the Board unanimously approved the minutes from the December 2, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Rider shared that there are two sides of DLLR. The first supports employees looking for employment; job seekers are assisted with resumes, training, and the job search. Mr. Rider shared the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) website and demonstrated how to find employers that are currently advertising. Mr. Rider works on the other side, this side works with businesses to find employees. The Upper Shore office for DLLR represents Talbot, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Dorchester, and Kent Counties. Many businesses enter their own employment requirements on the MWE website, a free service available to employers. Mr. Rider creates flyers that are posted at the local American Job Centers, Department of Social Services, Public Libraries, etc. Mr. Rider explained the manufacturing boot camp, designed to provide basic manufacturing skills and to prepare job seekers for current openings with manufacturers. The program includes classroom and shop floor training. Ms. Williams shared that the boot camp is also a mechanism to weed out participants that do not meet basic requirements, showing up on time, following safety regulations, etc.

Mayor Cerino gave a presentation on the Chestertown Marina Project. In 2012, the Town purchased the only working Marina in the Town of Chestertown. The Town purchased the Marina to preserve water access for residents to get on the River, preserve the ability of visitors to get into Chestertown by boat, and increase arts, heritage and ecotourism. Mayor Cerino shared it made no sense to expect a private investor purchase, restore, and maintain the property as a Marina. The property, now being owned by a municipality, allows the Town to apply for federal and state funding, not available to the private sector. The Marina directly supports the

January 6, 2016

Page 2

EDAB Minutes

operations of the schooner Sultana, Echo Hill Outdoor School, and the Chester River Packet. The Marina also generates revenue for the Fish Whistle, businesses in the Historic District, and throughout the county. The total cost of the project is estimated at approximately \$5 million, the current request to the State of Maryland is for \$1.5 million. Mayor Cerino received over 100 letters of support for the Chestertown Marina Revitalization project in less than two weeks. The letters of support accompanied the capital request to Governor Hogan.

Ms. Williams gave an overview on the Department of Commerce's discussions on finance and incentives. The Enterprise Zone will most likely be dissolved, the real property tax credits have worked well, while the income tax credits are rarely realized or claimed. Commerce is proposing a tiered system and currently Kent County falls in Tier 2, this gives all counties an opportunity to offer incentives for job creation and capital investment. The Enterprise Zone currently being sought will be sent to the Maryland Department of Commerce by the April 15, 2016 deadline. The Town of Chestertown and one census tract are the only areas in Kent County that meet the criteria to apply for an Enterprise Zone.

Ms. Williams shared that Economic Development placed two ads this year. The ads included Business Climate, Maryland's Eastern Shore, Economic Development and The Daily Record, Doing Business in Maryland, Outlook 2016. The Board questioned the results of past marketing efforts and suggested reaching out to the vendors for statistics. Mr. Luff shared that return of marketing dollars is a difficult task. Ms. Gray articulated the questions that need answers are, is it or is it not bringing us businesses, and would our absence be noted.

The Commercial Property Database is progressing, Ms. Genter and Ms. Gray are working with Mr. Depp on the database and the working group will be discussing the procedure to roll out the site to users, what needs to be monitored, etc. to ensure the database is relevant and accurate. Mr. Depp, Ms. Williams, and Carla Gerber, GIS Specialist, Planning, Housing, and Zoning will be meeting to discuss the options for providing maps of priority funding areas, sustainable communities, etc.

Mr. Depp provided Ms. Williams with a software solution for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to maintain the information currently being collected on the businesses in Kent County. The software proposed would also interface with our business directory, eliminating the need for double entry. The software would permit us to attach documents and presentations. CRM software would maintain continuity for Economic Development in Kent County.

Ms. Williams read an article quoting Jack Steinmetz, previous Kent County, Economic Development, Director and Ms. Genter, previous Kent County, Chamber of Commerce, Director from 2010.

Mr. Depp shared that he has been working with Ms. Williams to redesign and develop new content for the County's Economic Development website. We will take a start from scratch approach, identifying target audiences and developing content specific to their needs. The process of researching and collecting information has begun. We have been examining other

January 6, 2016

Page 3

EDAB Minutes

economic development websites to understand, what is common practice. Mr. Depp shared that collaboration and input from the board will be a factor in how quickly we can achieve the desired results. Mr. Depp shared the use of social media channels as a means to target content specific information. LinkedIn as an example has groups of site selectors. We can target information from the commercial property database to those groups quarterly.

A motion was made by Mr. Ampula, seconded by Mr. Jacob, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:56 p.m. The Board agreed to meet again on Wednesday, February 3, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator