

Economic Development Commission

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street, 3rd Floor

Chestertown, MD 21620

May 2, 2018

Commission Members Present: Rob Thompson, Jim Luff, Trae Hoffner, Cindy Genter, Tracey Williams, Shreyas Suresh, Kate Gray, and Bob Jacob

Commission Members Absent: Aaron Bramble

Also in Attendance: Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Susan O'Neill, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC)

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2018, meeting. On motion by Ms. Genter and seconded by Mr. Jacob, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the April 4, 2018, meeting.

Jamie Williams introduced Ms. O'Neill to the Commission and the members introduced themselves to Ms. O'Neill. Ms. O'Neill was hired in December 2017 and has 15 years of Economic Development experience. She shared the status of the USRC, which is one of five tri-county councils in Maryland. The councils were set up to assist rural communities in addressing regional issues providing resources (i.e. funding and partnerships). The USRC serves Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties, the smallest region by land mass and population. There was approximately a six-month lapse of any staff at the USRC, therefore, FY2017 reporting to the Department of Commerce and Rural Maryland Council needed to be completed. The next priority was to submit a scope of work and deliverables for the FY2018 funding and identify projects that could be completed in a relatively short time frame.

The USRC is a 501(c)3 non-profit and is currently funded by the Maryland Department of Commerce, the Rural Maryland Council, and the Counties. Mr. Luff asked who might donate to the USRC. Ms. O'Neill said that there are a lot of different possible sources, such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Department of Housing and Community Development. Mr. Luff stated the necessity to address transportation challenges of residents in the rural areas for medical, education, and employment purposes. Ms. O'Neill acknowledged the need for transportation solutions and shared that Cecil County was attracting businesses and they quickly realized the lack of transportation available. Some employers have developed their own transportation systems to address the need. Ms. O'Neill shared her business cards and stated she is open to any suggestions and questions and looks forward to working with the Commission.

Ms. Moredock gave an update on the recent events and projects in Planning and Zoning. In June, the Planning Commission will review the final site plan for Creafill Fibers to expand with the construction of shipping and receiving additions to three of the four existing buildings on site. The Planning Commission received several text amendments in the past several months to provide flexibility to existing and new businesses. The Commission favorably reviewed, and

the County Commissioners adopted a text amendment for a special exception use in the Crossroads Commercial District for the manufacturing, processing, and assembling of a food product, not to include an animal product. Cliff Road Properties, new owner of Great Oak Manor, has been struggling to expand in light of the Country Inn provision which limits expansion of the facility to 50% of existing building area as it existed as of 1989. The Commission favorably reviewed, and the County Commissioners adopted a text amendment for school bus parking lots in the Village and Commercial Districts (school bus parking had been permitted only as an accessory use in residential districts prior to this amendment).

The Planning Commission will review the proposed amendments to Millington's Comprehensive Plan which address the Town's short- and long-term annexation goals.

The Planning Commission and Board of Appeals reviewed the Casa Carmen special exception and site plan review application for an adapted reuse of an historic structure to operate proposed a wine tasting venue. Though the Planning Commission sent a favorable recommendation to the Board of Appeals, the Board denied the application citing a lack of clarity in the business plan. Owner/operator Enrique Pallares has since submitted a home occupation use permit and his plan is to grow his clientele and business by storing wine onsite and selling wine offsite (local restaurants, farmers market, online, so on). Mr. Pallares will resubmit a more fully-developed business plan for special exception review next year.

Ms. Moredock noted that a trend has emerged of people buying cargo containers and tractor trailers and using them as sheds. These structures are not compliant with building code or the intent of the Ordinance. This interpretation of the director was upheld on appeal by the Board of Appeals. The Planning staff has been taking enforcement action on these unlicensed "vehicles."

The Bay Bridge Monitoring Committee has met four times since the Commissioners reconvened the group. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 10 am in the Commissioners Hearing Room. Ms. Moredock emphasized that it is not an advocacy group; the role of the Committee is to review available information, monitor Bay Crossing Study progress, and make recommendations to the Commissioners. All minutes, agendas, and materials presented are available at www.kentcounty.com/committees/baybridge and the meetings are livestreamed.

Tracey Williams shared Kent County was number one in the State in Maryland in kindergarten readiness for the second year. It is believed this can be attributed to universal pre-k, open to all 4-year-olds in the county. This is the first year that 3rd graders who participated in the program will be taking standardized tests, the level of sustainability of kindergarten readiness will be determined. Ms. Williams shared the partnership between Kent County Public Schools, Washington College, and Chesapeake College. Students are given opportunities to travel to the colleges and participate in interactive science experiments, dual enrollment programs, and distance learning programs. Ms. Williams talked about ALICE (Alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate) training, a safety protocol that trains all staff how to react to an active intruder when details on the intruder's whereabouts are available to the staff.

Jamie Williams shared there is a meeting scheduled with the Department of Housing and Community Development representatives, Aisha Taylor and Ashlee Green. One person from each town was invited to attend. Ms. Taylor will review the Neighborhood Business Works loan program and Ashlee Green will review the grants available to sustainable communities. All the towns in Kent County are designated Sustainable Communities.

Jamie Williams shared that the Chestertown hotDesks location has its first tenant, a telecommuter, working for a dental supply company from Frederick. Ms. Williams noted that although this is not the ideal candidate it is a step in the right direction. The ideal candidate is an entrepreneur launching a business and eventually expanding to traditional office space in the County.

The Final Splice event is scheduled for May 24th and will be hosted by Washington College. The event will commemorate the completion of the 110-mile fiber optic broadband network throughout the County. Kent County will have a booth at the Tea Party, staffed by Information Technology and Economic Development. Ms. Williams recently attended the MEDA Summer conference and learned tactics for enhancing the marketing for Kent County by telling the stories and providing the human factor by telling how Kent County affected a small business or a family. The Economic Development budget was submitted last Tuesday and the request for a new administrative assistant was accepted and the position is now being advertised.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Genther, seconded by Mr. Thompson and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:26 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, June 6, 2018, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator