

Economic Development Commission

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street, 3rd Floor

Chestertown, MD 21620

July 11, 2018

Commission Members Present: Bob Jacob, Cindy Genter, Jim Luff, Kate Gray, Aaron Bramble, Rob Thompson

Commission Members Absent: Tracey Williams and Trae Hoffner

Also, in Attendance: Susan O’Neil, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC); Nancy LaJoice, Senior Business Development Representative, Maryland Department of Commerce; and Amy Moredock, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning

At 3:02 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the May 2 and June 6, 2018, meetings. On motion by Ms. Genter and seconded by Mr. Thompson, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the May 2 and June 6, 2018, meetings.

Jamie Williams shared the USRC has a new Executive Assistant, Janice Palmer. Ms. Williams introduced Ms. LaJoice. Ms. LaJoice shared she is a resident of Queen Anne in Queen Anne’s County. Previously serving as the Membership Director of the Baltimore Washington Corridor Chamber which merged with another chamber and became the Central Maryland Chamber and for three years serving on the Washington Board of Trade in Washington D.C. Ms. LaJoice represents Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, and Caroline counties.

Ms. Moredock shared the upcoming August Planning Commission projects. Creafill Fibers is expanding, and their final site plan is ready for approval pending completion of all sureties’. A special exception and site plan are being reviewed for a poultry operation in Lynch for the farm to be subdivided, regarding stormwater and waste management.

Ms. Moredock shared information about the zoning text amendment application submitted by Cliff Road Properties’ aka Great Oak Manor. The county will assist in scheduling mediation to discuss concerns and possible solutions prior to the application being reviewed by the Planning Commission. There are two special exceptions, the Human Society of Kent County and the proposed school bus parking location in Worton. Mr. Luff asked if there was a timeframe for the comprehensive rezoning to be completed. Ms. Moredock shared that a budget item for a consultant will be requested in the FY2020 budget process.

The Bay Bridge Monitoring Committee continues to meet. The committee will be presenting to the Commissioners to request that the Commissioners publicly express dissatisfaction with the latest meeting regarding the bridge crossing to the State. Building permits have been issued for Gillespie Precast, Inn at Huntingfield, Massey Aero, Lindstrom Excavating, Haven Harbor South, Tolchester Marina, Kitty Knight House, Echo Hill, Casa Carmen, The Wheelhouse, Willards, and the Chestertown Animal Hospital in recent months. Ms. Genter shared the seven-and-a-half-acre parcel, that was the Stoltzfus’ property on Route 301 has sold.

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Ms. Genther presented a review of the Maryland Rural Development Corporation (MRDC) housing survey. The survey was a raw data report and was drawn as a convenience sample from ten data collection sites. The surveys were conducted in Kent and Caroline Counties and results were obtained through personal one-on-one interviews. Major concerns expressed by residents surveyed were the availability of affordable housing, transportation, safety, the hidden homeless population, and employment assistance. The survey did not ask about employment, yet some respondents indicated that there was no work in Kent County. Ms. O'Neill asked if there were any overlap or collaboration between the Kent County United Way Needs Assessment and the MRDC housing study. Ms. Genther provided the Commission with a housing market summary for residential sales for June 2018 and year-to-date sales for Kent County. The market is starting to stabilize; however, it was down nearly 30% in April. Ms. O'Neill asked if the negative sales growth in April was due to low inventory. Ms. Genther stated inventory remained stable and was unlikely the cause of the negative sales ratio. The Commission discussed Section 8 housing, on a project level and on an individual level, and the approval process. Grant opportunities for developers were discussed as a possibility to prompt affordable housing development. The town of Rock Hall currently maintains a high inventory of housing and currently everything is full and rental prices are high. Ms. Williams shared the cost of living and housing statistics for all Maryland counties in comparison to the national and statewide averages.

Jamie Williams shared recent updates to www.kentcounty.com/business and the incentives listed on the site for new and established businesses. Each incentive has a landing page with additional details and there is a form to request further information from Economic Development staff.

There will be training on July 31, 2018 regarding Opportunity Zones, a federal program, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development will be implementing the program at the state level, Ms. Williams is scheduled to attend. One census tract in Kent County, Chestertown, is a designated Opportunity Zone.

Jaime Williams updated the commission that the administrative position has been filled by Emily McCoy and her first day will be July 16, 2018. Natalie Theriault, Washington College student returned on June 26, 2018, and will be working through the fall and spring semesters of her senior year.

Jamie Williams and a representative from each of the incorporated towns attended a meeting on May 3, 2018. The town representatives were identified as the Economic Development lead for that Town. The Department of Housing and Community Development presented information about Community Legacy Grants and Neighborhood Business Works loan programs. This group is planning to meet quarterly and share major projects and discuss how we can assist and support one another.

Ms. Williams shared an ad and editorial that will be placed in Expansion Solutions magazine. The county has negotiated for editorial space when placing ads and is also utilizing magazines and media with a broader audience, i.e. trades shows and conferences.

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Jamie Williams and Ms. O'Neill shared that the 301-corridor study is on hold until the new Kent County Public Works Director gets acclimated and the Queen Anne's County study can be reviewed.

Mr. Bramble stated that he spoke with Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology about implementing paperless billing and online bill pay for property taxes and sewer and water bills. Mr. Bramble will conduct some research and report back to the Commission.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Gray, seconded by Mr. Jacob and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:55pm The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday August 1, 2018, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Director