

Economic Development Advisory Board Kent County, Maryland

January 14, 2015

Board Members Present: James Rich, Chair, Ron Athey, Dan MacLeod, Robert Jacob, Thomas Beckett, Robert Ampula, and Jonh Carroll

Board Members Absent: Zoe Schneider

Also in attendance: Commissioner William Short, Ernest Crofoot, County Administrator, Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology, Amy Moredock, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning, Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council, Loretta Lodge, Executive Director, Kent County Chamber of Commerce, Ron Hawkins, RBI Business Mentor, Maryland Technology Development Corporation, and Jim Luff.

At 4:00 p.m. the meeting convened.

On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Mr. Athey the minutes from the December 3, 2014, meeting were approved.

Mr. Boone shared the presentation that given to the Commissioners on Tuesday, January 13, 2015 giving an update on the last mile broadband project. Mr. Boone shared a GIS map using google maps that identified the Maryland Broadband Cooperative and Network Maryland paths of broadband connectivity throughout the County. The map also identified the locations of students, businesses, County structures, etc. Mr. Boone added layers showing the proposed paths for the County to install a fiber network to extend broadband services in order for service providers to take the connection to the door steps of citizens and businesses. In the presentation Mr. Boone demonstrated the phased in approach and identified, each phase and the reasoning behind the ranking. The Commissioners were in agreement that Mr. Boone should solicit requests for proposals (RFP). The Commissioners stated that the County is willing to make an investment.

Ms. Mason gave a power point presentation on the business retention and expansion in economic development. Components of a strong business retention and expansion strategy begin with our local and regional profile, which include the economic condition, population characteristics, labor force characteristics, physical condition, knowledge base resources, and quality of life. Ms. Mason expanded on each component, noting that the strengths should be highlighted on the website and known by the Economic Development office.

Mr. Ampula advised he will have updated demographics for the next Economic Development Advisory Board meeting. Mr. Ampula asked if there were any guidelines for county offices to do business locally. Mr. Crofoot advised that all things being equal we should be purchasing locally. Mr. Ampula also questioned what the Board knows about Queen Anne's County's Economic Development Incentive Fund. Commissioner Short shared that it is an

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awesome program, and it is funded from recordation taxes, which Kent County does not have available.

Ms. Mason shared that our local plan should include conversations with the three largest employers in Kent County. Commissioner Short expressed that the hospital, the college, and Dixon have their own Economic Development plan. Ms. Mason shared that partnering with entities that are charged with the responsibilities outlined in her presentation, and developing relationships with the key players at local businesses. Commissioner Short shared that these are the type of conversations that need to be discussed in the next six months.

Ms. Moredock shared that there are a lot of good things happening in terms of small business development and larger business expansion. Planning, Housing, and Zoning received twenty site plans, including seven expansions, and eleven new businesses in 2014. Ms. Moredock reviewed the existing companies that are expanding. The new businesses do not fit into any specific category they are unique in nature. Ms. Moredock reviewed the new businesses with the Board. Mr. Ampula noted that Ms. Moredock's report indicates a very positive trend for economic development in Kent County.

Mr. Crofoot shared the legislative requests that were presented to Senator Stephen Hershey, Delegates Jay Arentz, Jeff Ghrist, and Jay Jacobs, and John Fiastro, Chief of Staff, Senator Hershey's Office, on December 16, 2014.

Mr. Crofoot and Ms. Mordock requested that Board members review the sections of the Comprehensive Plan that relate to Economic Development. The plan will be reviewed next year and there will be public meetings held, during that process. Commissioner Short further suggested that Board members attend and support businesses with plans that support the Comprehensive Plan, at Planning Commission meetings and Public Hearings.

Ms. Lodge invited anyone interested to attend a meeting on January 15, 2015, 7:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn, Chestertown. Redner's Market would be presenting information on the new location in Chestertown.

Board membership four terms have expired Mr. Rich, Mr. Athey, Mr. Carroll, and Mr. Beckett. Mr. Rich and Mr. Athey have served two consecutive terms and are not eligible for re-appointment. Mr. Carroll has requested to not be reappointed at this time and Mr. Beckett is interested in serving another term. The Board reviewed the interest forms submitted, and unanimously agreed to recommend Jim Luff and Cindy Genter for appointment, and Mr. Beckett for reappointment. Mr. Athey will remain on the Board until the final candidate is appointed.

Mr. Hawkins shared he is currently working with three Kent County companies, COG Industries, Overboard Innovation, LLC, and Rock Hall Acquaponics. COG Industries is a small machining company, two years old, Mr. Hawkins is assisting with safety and operational advice. Overboard Innovation, LLC, invented and built a device that uses oysters at a personal dock to

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oxygenate the water by lifting the oysters out of the water periodically using a timer and solar power. Rock Hall Acquaponics is a new start-up that will raise eels and vegetables.

The meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m., and the board agreed to meet again on Wednesday, February 4, 2015, at 4:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams

Deputy Clerk