

Kent County Economic Development Advisory Board

Minutes of February 6, 2008

Vice Chairman Grafton called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

Members present were: Mickey Elsberg, Jeff Grafton, Tom Beckett, C. Breck Debnam and Kent County Economic Development Director Jack Steinmetz, who acted as recording secretary.

Members absent were: Jim Gillespie, Jay Yerkes, and Carrie Anderson

Guests in Attendance: John Mason, Regional Representative DBED
 Dan McDermott, Sr., Executive Director, Upper Shore Workforce
 Investment Board

The minutes of the January 9, 2008 meeting were reviewed. It was moved by Mr. Beckett, seconded by Mr. Debnam, to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion passed unanimously.

Recognition of Past Chairman Elsberg:

Director Steinmetz presented Mr. Elsberg with a plaque citing Mr. Elsberg's past service, including Chairmanship of the EDAB, and thanked him for all that he had contributed. A photo, including all the Board Members present, was taken of the presentation. The photo and a press release will be sent to the Kent County News.

Guest Speaker:

Mr. Dan McDermott, Sr., Executive Director, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (WIB), provided the Board with an in-depth presentation on the background and purpose of the WIB. He discussed how the 12 WIB departments throughout the State are all funded with 100% Federal money and they were responsible for carrying out the provisions of the 1998 Workforce Investment Act, by working with Disadvantaged Youth, Disadvantaged Adults, and Displaced Adults (plant closings). He then reviewed the Chestertown Foods Rapid Response Activities program which is ongoing. Director Steinmetz lauded Mr. McDermott and his team for their speed and level of professionalism in assisting the Economic Development Office in responding to the plant closing. Board members engaged in further dialog with Mr. McDermott and he was thanked for his presentation.

Chairman's Report:

Their was no formal "Chairman's Report"

Individual Board Member Reports:

Mr. Breck Debnam, Agriculture

Mr. Debnam reported that Kent County had been named as the Number One County in the U.S. to live in by *Progressive Farmer Magazine*, a publication dating from 1886. He further reported on a lawsuit filed against the State of Maryland by the Maryland Riverkeepers, in an attempt to make farm plans for soil conservation and runoff public records. This ominous litigation would literally

make a farmer's personal business plans open to anyone, and the farm groups are very concerned about the potential for invasion of privacy. He then led a discussion about the potential for the use of agricultural waste in the production of methane, which is then converted to electricity.

Mr. Grafton, Education

Mr. Grafton reported on the latest Board of Education actions, including the establishment of new graduation criteria designed to streamline the educational process without lowering any academic standards. He reported on the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Committee's efforts to initiate a STEM Academy in the school system. He noted that Director Steinmetz is a member of the Committee, and explained that he was one of the Committee members representing the business sector of the community. He explained the new practice of the Board of Education moving its monthly meetings to sites throughout the County, in an effort to provide a venue for increased public/parental participation.

Mr. Elsberg, Workforce Housing

Mr. Elsberg reported an interest by Home Partnership in a parcel of property off of Route 20 and Flatland Road, for the construction of workforce housing units. There is a need to have a higher density approved before this project would be considered viable. He described the Home Partnership organization and cited their extremely high (98%) success ratio, and also reviewed the Clark Farm and Flatland Road housing efforts.

Mr. Beckett, SCORE

Mr. Beckett described the upcoming Kent County/Queen Anne's County, March 19th, joint presentations on Marketing Skills. He then outlined for the Board the activities which took place the previous Saturday at the Annual Kent County Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner. He noted that Gillespie & Sons was awarded the Large Business of the Year Award, Radio Station 1530 was awarded the Small Business of the Year Award, and the City of Rock Hall 300th Anniversary Committee was awarded the Community Service of the Year Award. He then noted that Director Steinmetz was awarded the Business Person of the Year Award. Director Steinmetz thanked the Board members for their congratulations and expressed how fortunate he felt to be working with so many supportive County personnel, business owners, and EDAB members.

Mr. Beckett again reminded the Board of the importance of considering an area somewhere in the northern section of the Rte. 301 Corridor in which to locate a "clean" tech/professional park. We should not give up on that concept.

Director's Report:

Director Steinmetz completed the report and update on Chestertown Foods, explaining that he was very concerned about the remaining property and how difficult he viewed the sale of the property, which has three zoning districts within it and a major waste water permit which is expiring in September and will require MDE renegotiation by any new owner. He told of the work he is doing with the owners and how they are all attempting to relocate a new owner/operator.

Director Steinmetz updated the Board on the recent meetings held with the principals of Needham Mushroom, the finance group from DBED, the MD Department of Agriculture, and the Superintendent of Kent County Schools. All meetings were held to make the Needham transition into Kent County a smooth one, and progress is being made.

Director Steinmetz updated the Vineyard Management Company efforts and noted that three proposals had been received, with a preferred consultant identified. Now the question of funding for the project remains the only issue.

Director Steinmetz noted that he had just come from the Grand Opening Ceremony for the new Holiday Inn Express, which is owned by Mr. Anil Patel and managed by Mr. Jim Sauers. The Chamber of Commerce hosted the event and Kelly McIntyre provided the catering service.

Director Steinmetz reminded everyone that the next meeting would be Wednesday, March 5, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Elsberg moved for adjournment, and Mr. Beckett seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:36 p.m.