



Audio recordings of the Economic and Tourism Development Commission meetings can be found on the Recordings Tab.

May 11, 2022

Commission Members Present: Sandy Scott, Dick Story, Suzanne Einstein, Charlie Athey, Rob Thompson, and Tracey Williams

Members Absent: Aaron Bramble

Also in Attendance: Jamie Williams, Director, Katie Wright, Economic Development Manager, Jana Carter, Tourism Manager, Shalyn Boulden, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development; Carla Gerber, Deputy Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning; and Sarah King, Director, Kent County Chamber of Commerce

At 3:02 p.m. Mr. Story called the meeting to order. Mr. Story requested a motion to approve the minutes from April 13, 2022, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Tracey Williams, April 13, 2022, minutes were unanimously approved.

Ms. Gerber shared The Board of Appeals met on April 18th, 2022, and reviewed the application for a five-acre community solar array on a parcel zoned Agricultural. The Board denied the special exception based on their interpretation that the proposed area of use, which is limited to five acres, included the arrays, landscaping, and access roads exceeded the limit and did not meet the requirements of the Land Use Ordinance. Staff had interpreted “area of use” to be only the solar arrays. The Board’s attorney opined that either interpretation was supportable, and staff has decided to propose a zoning text amendment to clarify the area of use language.

The Planning Commission met on May 5, 2022, and recommended favorably a citizen-sponsored zoning text amendment to add septic tank maintenance and excavation to the Village District as a special exception. The Commission recommended favorably to the Board of Appeals on two variance applications. The Planning Commission also approved Bill Ashmore’s concept and preliminary plan for a proposed private destination/residence club at the southeast corner of Skinners Neck Road and Kelly’s Park Road.

The Comprehensive Rezoning Task Force will be meeting on May 25, 2022, at 6:00 PM to discuss the last of the citizen proposed text amendments. The Task Force has moved to meet every other month and the goal is to have the text ready for adoption by the end of the year.

John Schratwieser, Director, Kent Cultural Alliance (KCA), and Hester Sachse, Deputy Director and Manager, Chestertown Arts & Entertainment District shared that the KCA, formally the Kent County Arts Council, was founded in 1975. KCA has reached its goal to complete the renovation of the building at 101 Spring Avenue in Chestertown, the historic Mansfield-Eliasson House. The Arts Council is funded partially by the State, to operate and support the Arts and Arts Education in Kent County, this is done by grants to organizations and community events and projects. The building will be used as a gathering space, art display area, artist in residency

housing, and small office for staff. KCA has a strong relationship with the Kent County Public Schools and has been hosting professional development sessions with the fine arts teachers. Ms. Sachse was hired in October when the previous manager retired. The Chestertown Arts & Entertainment District is continuing art walks, implementing art demonstrations, and working in collaboration with the Downtown Chestertown Association (DCA) as well as KCA on multiple projects. Ms. Sachse is working with Chestertown's Public Arts Committee to bring a collection of sculptures to Chestertown. The grand opening of the KCA building is scheduled for November 12, 2022. Jamie Williams thanked the KCA for their service in providing funding to our local independent artists and our Arts organizations.

Jamie Williams shared the national unemployment rate is 3.6% with Maryland's rate at 4.6% and Kent County at 4.3%. Most employers are seeking employees and inflation is at its highest in forty years. The Kent County Visitor Guide is being designed in-house and scheduled to be printed before Memorial Day. Millington Elementary School discussions are continuing regarding the potential senior housing project. Flagship Cinemas has paid the second admission and amusement tax payment on the revolving loan fund and has expressed interest in obtaining a liquor license. Economic and Tourism Development has submitted two letters of support for the Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study and may want to make a financial commitment to support the grant application being submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Ms. Carter shared EDA funds are expected to come to the County through the Maryland Office of Tourism. The Maryland Office of Tourism has asked Destination Marketing Organizations to propose options for dividing the funds to be used for a transformational tourism project. Kent County is waiting on the amount for the FY2023 Marketing Grant. Lodging tax revenues for quarter 1 and quarter 2 of FY2022 are 12.3% above pre-pandemic levels. Jay Fleming visited Kent County for a photo shoot to capture high-resolution photos of outdoor recreation activities and food and beverage images.

Museum on Main Street, a Smithsonian traveling exhibit, will be in Kent County in the Spring of 2023. Rock Hall has applied to host. The space required is 1,300 square feet and will have to be available for six weeks, from April 29 to June 10, 2023. The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area has requested funding for a feasibility study to research the possibility of seeking a National Heritage Designation which would bring national resources to Kent County to assist with the restoration, interpretation, and promotion of cultural assets. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra is launching a multi-year Music for Maryland tour and Kent County will be one of the stops during the inaugural year. The event will take place in Wilmer Park on August 6, 2022.

Ms. Boulden shared new promotional items, including canvas bags, pens, notepads, and lip balm, displaying the Kent County logo. These items are used at job fairs and conferences to promote Kent County as a destination, a place for employment, a place to grow your business, and an ideal place to raise a family or retire.

Main Street Chestertown requested a letter of support for a grant application to the Department of Housing and Community Development to create a Master Plan. On motion by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Ms. Scott, and carried unanimously to provide a letter of support to accompany the application.

A motion was made by Mr. Athey, seconded by Tracey Williams, and carried unanimously to approve the recommendation of the membership committee to the County Commissioners for a new ETDC member appointment.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Ms. Einstein, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:07 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD, Director