

# *Economic Development Advisory Board*

*The County Commissioners of Kent County*

*400 High Street*

*Chestertown, MD 21620*

**November 4, 2015**

Board Members Present: Bob Ampula, Kate Gray, Aaron Bramble, Cindy Genter, Bob Jacob, Shreyas Suresh, and Jim Luff

Board Members Absent: Dan MacLeod

Also in Attendance: Ron Hawkins, RBI Business Mentor, TEDCO, Shelley Herman, County Administrator and Amy Moredock, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning

At 3:00 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order.

The Board requested time to review the minutes, given they were emailed late this afternoon. The Board agreed and Mr. Luff stated that the approval of the October minutes would be moved to the December meeting.

Ms. Moredock shared that the Planning Commission granted preliminary site plan approval for a landscape and antique shop outside of Rock Hall. The Planning Commission reviewed a conceptual site plan for PharmKent and provided comments as requested. Information requested included the process, storage, security, parking, etc. This information is required to complete the State application package that is due on November 6, 2015. Ms. Williams shared that an additional meeting was held with Ms. Moredock, Katrina Tucker, Community Planner, Planning, Housing; and Zoning, Brad Johnson and Peter Murphy, PharmKent, and Commissioner Short on October 22, 2015. At that meeting Ms. Moredock and Ms. Tucker shared detailed information about the process and what could be completed prior to approval of the State license, in order for PharmKent to minimize time to production in the event a State cannabis grower and processing license is granted. Ms. Moredock advised PharmKent to submit construction plans parallel with the State License application, due to the onerous review, driven mainly by the State Fire Marshal. Ms. Genter asked about the State Fire Marshal lead time issue and the possibility of taking this issue to the Governor's Regulatory Reform Commission for a potential solution. Ms. Williams shared that the Department of Commerce was contacted to set up a visit with Secretary Michael Gill to visit Kent County and hear first-hand the challenges businesses are facing.

Ms. Moredock reviewed the projects on the Planning Commission's agenda for November. Cottage industries (businesses which operate in residential districts) were discussed and the challenges of balancing enforcement and fostering economic development in allowing these businesses to form and grow.

Mr. Hawkins presented a power-point sharing TEDCO's goals: to assist technology based start-up companies in moving to the next stage of commercialization, to identify technology driven solutions that help solve problems for existing small businesses, and to foster the building of a technology community in the rural areas. TEDCO assists businesses with fewer than 16

November 4, 2015

Page 2

EDAB Minutes

employees, less than 5 years old, in good standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation, and annual revenue of less than \$1 million. TEDCO provides mentoring in the areas of business development and technology assistance.

Ms. Williams reviewed the Economic Development Board Meeting Information section that was recently added to the website. The goal with the new equipment being installed in the Commissioners' Hearing Room is to live stream all meetings. Ms. Williams asked the Board members for assistance in assessing what is currently on the website and being posted on social media sites and provide feedback for improvement in effectiveness.

Mr. Ampula asked about the status of the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). Ms. Williams shared that the RLF Eligibility and Application Guidelines were approved by the Commissioners at their November 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. A press release is being prepared and a rack card is the next on the agenda for promotion of the RLF. The Eligibility Application Guidelines have now been posted on the County website as well as the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center's (ESEC) website.

Press releases were discussed for the purpose of promotion of the County's efforts in Economic Development and the Kent County Public School System's (KCPS) improvements. Ms. Gray shared concerns with the County promoting the school system given the current consolidation process. The Board agreed the school system should take the reins of their own public relations. Ms. Williams will visit with Linda Dawson, Executive Director, Kent Forward, and share the position of the Board and offer assistance at their request.

Ms. Genter shared that a working group has been formed to discuss a Commercial Property Database for the Economic Development website. The database will provide information about properties and buildings that are available for sale or lease. The target audience is site selectors, new businesses, and current businesses who want to expand or relocate. Mr. Jacob, Mr. Ampula, and Ms. Williams will work together to understand where county revenues come from by land use type and industry sectors to better understand the economic impact within the County. The Department of Commerce suggested the County Finance Office. After some investigation it was discovered that the information needed is not reported to the County by the State. Mr. Ampula provided training to Ms. Williams on where to obtain statistics and demonstrated what was available through SCORE's access to ESRI. The working group will schedule a meeting to continue the conversations.

Ms. Williams briefly touched on the idea to fast track businesses and to develop a checklist for new business ventures and the possibility of assigning a mentor for entrepreneurs. Ms. Genter suggested the Board research other programs and model the best practices to develop our own. Ms. Gray and Mr. Luff suggested contacting Kaesha Haythe, Director, Dorchester County Economic Development for further information.

Ms. Genter requested Mr. Suresh research student retention, how to get students to stay and how many come back after graduation. Mr. Suresh suggested reaching out to the Alumni for data they may already collect through surveys. Ms. Williams shared that she delivered some of

November 4, 2015

Page 3

EDAB Minutes

the Maryland's Eastern Shore, Economic Development magazines to the Career Center at Washington College to make students aware of opportunities, businesses, quality of life, etc. in the region.

Mr. Ampula shared that he has been doing a very unofficial survey to ask employees from local businesses where they live and at least one third of those asked came from Queen Anne's County or Delaware.

A motion was made by Mr. Ampula, seconded by Ms. Genther, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:47 p.m. The Board agreed to meet again on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams  
Coordinator