

Economic Development Commission
The County Commissioners of Kent County
400 High Street
Chestertown, MD 21620

January 4, 2017

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

Board Members Absent: Shreyas Suresh and Mary Ford

Also in Attendance: Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Scott Boone, Director and Jason Depp, Webmaster, Information Technology

At 3:00 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2 and December 7, 2016 meetings. On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Mr. Bramble the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the November 2 and December 7, 2016 meetings.

Ms. Williams shared that an Economic Development departmental update would be given at the Commissioners meeting on January 10, 2017 at 6 p.m. Marketing efforts for attraction of residents and businesses were shared and Ms. Williams is talking to Mid-Atlantic Real Estate Journal to place an ad and editorial in the Economic Development issue.

A Hospitality Industry Breakfast & Roundtable with Chesapeake College is scheduled for Tuesday, January 31, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. at the Fish Whistle. The focus will be employment development goals and challenges of hospitality industry businesses. Another roundtable will be held in February for the trades.

Ms. Williams shared the unemployment rate for November 2016, and shared that employment rate has steadily declined since 2011. In addition the unemployment stats for the County, the State and the United States can be found under the demographics tab of the Economic Development website.

Ms. Williams is working with a potential new business owner who is interested in opening a Day Care. Information was provided and introductions were made with the potential new business owner and the owner of Carrott Top Day Care that recently closed in Kent County. A new antique store is moving to Kennedyville from Galena. The building in Kennedyville will be demolished and a new structure built. There is a senior housing facility being built in Millington. Dollar General is moving forward with locations in Worton and Millington. There are also discussions about the need for an Assisted Living Facility in the Chestertown area.

Ms. Williams shared updates about Admiral Cleaners, The Corner Print Shop, Stams (which is now closed) and the Walgreens purchase of the Rite Aids and agreement with Fred's

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Pharmacy. Mr. Ampula shared that a new business is working with SCORE to sub-lease space from JR Alfree to establish an ice cream, candy, and bakery storefront. In addition, Chester River Wine and Cheese is expanding and opening another storefront; "Welcome Home" which will focus on cookware, tableware, and home textiles.

A motion was made by Mr. Amupula to form a sub-committee to help develop a recruitment package and process for attraction, the motion was seconded by Ms. Genter and unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Karen Couch, Superintendent, Kent County Public Schools shared a Power Point presentation on the progress of the school district in the past four years which included; replacing outdated textbooks, updating instructional materials, universal pre-kindergarten, digital learning environment, professional development, Naviance, college and career readiness, communication software applications, more resources for underperforming schools, expanding algebra class, teacher academy added to Career Technology Education program, measurement of academic progress assessments, and recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers. Enrollment projections were discussed and the decisions that will have to be made in regard to consolidation and programming due to budget shortfalls.

Ms. Williams will send out additional dates to hold a workshop to update The Economic Development Plan and advise the group accordingly.

Ms. Williams and Ms. Gray will meet tomorrow to discuss the Commerce Zone Tax Credit proposal.

The sub-committee to develop a New Business Lead/Inquiry process was discussed, Ms. Williams, Mr. Bramble, Mr. Ampula, and Mr. MacLeod expressed interest in being a part of the sub-committee. Ms. Genter will lead the sub-committee and send out a draft outline to be reviewed and further discussed at a future meeting.

Mr. Luff shared the information he had recently discovered in regard to the Mills Branch Solar Project. Mr. Luff also shared information about the application for solar on the property known as the Clark Farm.

Mr. Boone gave an update on the progress of fiber project. Mr. MacLeod shared that information was shared about low cost internet options in Kent County with families enrolled in the free and reduced meal program. Delmarva Wifi and BridgeMaxx offer low cost plans with application. Services typically require line of sight to the provider's towers. Mr. Ampula requested information on how many residents and businesses have signed up for service with ThinkBig. Ms. Williams will request that information and report back to the Commission.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Ampula, seconded by Mr. Bramble, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:40 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, February 1, 2017, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams

Coordinator