



**Audio recordings of the Economic Development Commission meetings can be found at <https://www.kentcounty.com/economic-development/board-meetings> click on the ‘Audio Recordings Tab’.**

**January 6, 2021**

Commission Members Present: Aaron Bramble, Tracey Williams, Dick Story, Cindy Genter, Rob Thompson, and Kate Gray

Commission Members Absent: Jim Luff

Also in Attendance: Bob Jacob, County Commissioner; Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Jamie Williams, Director and Jana Carter, Tourism Manager, Economic & Tourism Development

At 3:02 p.m. Mr. Bramble called the meeting to order. Mr. Bramble requested a motion to approve the minutes from the December 2, 2020 meeting. On motion by Mr. Story and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the December 4, 2020 meeting.

Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning provided an update of the department and projects. The next meeting for the Comprehensive Rezoning Update Task Force is scheduled for Thursday, January 14 at 6 p.m. The Task Force has been working on the mission statement and organizing principles. They will begin reviewing content at the January meeting. The Planning Commission is reviewing the final site plan for Chester River Yacht & Country Club expansion of the parking area, Delmarva Power and Light Company for a final Major Site Plan and preliminary review of Great Oak Manor expansion.

Mr. Mackey shared the State of Maryland adopted the National Electrical Code (NEC) in March 2020. The Kent and Queen Anne’s County Board of Electrical Examiners deferred implementation of the new code to January 2021. Commissioner Jacobs asked if Delaware adopted the NEC 2020. Ms. Genter requested a link to the code to share with Kent County contractors. Ms. Gray and Ms. Genter expressed concern of the added cost for new construction. Mr. Mackey shared that the Board of Electrical Examiners is scheduled to meet on Thursday and will discuss the questions raised by the Commission and will also provide a link or excerpt of the updated section. Mr. Story asked if multi-family housing cost was comparable.

Ms. Williams shared the annual Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland Report for 2019. The report is contracted through the State and our participation is a requirement of the State Marketing grant. Tourism crosses many NAICS codes therefore, this analysis is important. Kent County tourism in Kent County generated \$63 million in visitor spending, in line with 2018. Second homes generate the largest portion of visitor spending in Kent County, other categories include food and beverage, transportation, lodging, and retail. Retail is currently being discussed within the department with trends predicting that 95% will be online by 2040. Ms. Williams requested we keep in mind that tourism dollars are weighted more heavily than circulating dollars within our community. We have been working on how some of the numbers within the report are being calculated. Mr. Bramble asked if farm rentals for hunting were

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included in the data. Staff will investigate further. The report will be shared with the County Commissioners.

Jamie Williams gave an update on COVID grants available to businesses and organizations, all check except one has been distributed. There are a few dollars remain for Sanitization. We are working on finalizing the State and Federal dollars spent on each grant program. The CoronaVirus Updates, Business Resources tab continues to be updated with financial and other business assistance resources <https://www.kentcounty.com/coronavirus>.

A new grant is available to local agricultural businesses. The program was initiated by Maureen O'Shea, Ag Coordinator, Cecil County Economic Development and funded by the Upper Shore Regional Council. A request will be presented to the County Commissioners for a County match to further leverage a grant program with MARBIDCO. [www.kentcounty.com/aggrant](http://www.kentcounty.com/aggrant).

Additional restaurant relief funds were announced by Governor Hogan on December 17, 2020. Staff has a request prepared to go before the County Commissioners at their next meeting to distribute the funds based on the previous applications received to get the funds distributed quickly and not add an addition burden of paperwork on our restaurant owners. Staff is working on the lodging grants, also announced on December 17<sup>th</sup>. Guidance was provided by the Maryland Office of Tourism Development and the grant agreement was received today.

The Kent and Queen Anne's County Chambers held their pre-legislative session this morning with our District 36 elected officials. Senator Hershey shared three major wins for the 2020 session, broadband access, telehealth, and data center tax exemption. Delegate Jacobs shared the new guidelines for testimony. Ms. Williams reviewed the Maryland Chamber priorities and anticipated critical issues and Maryland Association of Counties initiatives.

Nancy LaJoice, Senior Business Development Representative, Maryland Department of Commerce, offered any business or organization with questions about email legitimacy requesting information on the Commerce grants please reach out and Nancy and she will assist with verification. Jack Schammel, TEDCO RBII Mentor, shared that TEDCO will be administering a \$5 million fund for disadvantaged companies, in rural counties, adversely affected by the pandemic. Details to follow and funds will be released in February. Mr. Thompson offered to provide updates on the PPP loans approved through the federal stimulus approved in December and will share updates.

Ms. Gray asked about the status of the Economic Development Commission, as this was to be her last meeting according to her term expiration date. Ms. Williams shared that on December 8, 2020, the Commissioners voted to merge the two departments. The next step is for the Commissioners to decide on the board/commission structure. The proposal to the Commissioners will be to implement the changes the EDC voted on back in 2019 and merge the EDC and TDAB and create an Economic & Tourism Development Commission. Ms. Williams reached out to Ms. Gray, Mr. Luff, and Ms. Genther and all agreed to serve until the Commissioners vote on the recommendation. The same request was made of the two members with expiring terms on the TDAB. We will continue to utilize sub-committees for specific projects and initiatives.

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There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Story seconded by Ms. Gray and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD, Director  
Department of Economic & Tourism Development