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March 3, 2021

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

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

At 3:03 p.m. Mr. Bramble called the meeting to order. Mr. Bramble requested a motion to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2021 meeting. On motion by Mr. Luff and seconded by Mr. Thompson, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the February 3, 2021 meeting.

Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning provided an update of the department and projects. The Draft Environmental Impact Study for the Bay Crossing was made available for review on MDTA's website at <https://baycrossingstudy.com>.

On February 10, the Comprehensive Rezoning Task Force met to discuss the proposed structural changes to reduce the length of the zoning code were presented by the consultant firm ZoneCo. A document proposing structural changes to the zoning code is available [here](#). The proposal would reduce the total number of County zoning districts by combining similar districts and eliminating districts with no actual land area contained in them. The outcome would be five non-Critical Area zoning districts and four Critical Area zoning districts. The proposal would also have sub-sections, such as forest conservation, floodplains, and environmental standards, occur in only one place in the revised zoning code, reducing the overall length of the County's Land Use Ordinance. There are two task force meetings scheduled in March. One is planned for Wednesday, March 10 at 5 p.m. and Wednesday, March 31 at 6 p.m. At the first meeting, the task force will review members' requests for text changes. At the second meeting, the consultant will present a sample, proposed new zoning district chapter for review and input. The meeting agendas will include an opportunity for public comments.

On February 4th, the Planning Commission met. The Commission recommended favorably on the two zoning text amendments, countywide landscaping for utility-scale solar arrays, as amended by interlineation, and an amendment to permit class 8 farm breweries in the agriculture zoning district as a permitted use. The Commission also discussed the liquid propane storage facility submitted by Pep-up for major site plan preliminary review.

Ms. Genter presented the 2020 residential real estate market attached. Observations and opportunities included extremely low existing home for sale and inventory will reduce 2021 sales and transfer tax revenues, increasing land sales should mean more new homes and higher property tax revenues, and the land use ordinance update is in progress.

Ms. Gray shared observations on the commercial leasing side of the real estate market. Sharing that in general, in terms of leasing, office space is down and industrial is space up. This is attributed to the need for warehousing and online retail. Shorter term leases are being requested due to the uncertainty of the market. On the eastern shore occupancy rates are up due to people leaving cities or more populated areas. Longer term it will be interesting to see what happens with larger office space in cities. What will companies do at the end of lease terms? Some industries have grown during the pandemic and KRM's diverse portfolio has been a silver lining.

Ms. Williams shared the change in the weekly staff reports. CHR4-2021 to combine Economic Development and Tourism was introduced last night at the County Commissioners' meeting. The public hearing will be held on March 16, 2021 at 6 p.m. and a vote will take place on April 6, 2021 and will be effective 45 days after adoption. Ms. Williams requested Mr. Story provide some public comments from his work with the task force that provided recommendations to the County Commissioners on the new structure for the departments and board/commission. Ms. Williams shared additional grants and programs coming down from the State for COVID relief.

Ms. Williams introduced Ms. Wright, Economic Development Manager. Ms. Wright shared her background and marketing and communication qualifications and experience. Ms. Williams shared some social media changes and that the staff is meeting bi-weekly to discuss best practices.

Ms. Carter shared a tourism update. The 2021 visitor's guide is being developed and a QR code will be utilized to encourage visitors to download the guide on their phone. Ms. Carter continues to work on a healthy mix of advertising. Ms. Carter also shared the All-American Road Designation elevates the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway designation. The Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway included, Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's, the new designation includes all nine Counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The road begins in Chesapeake City and ends in Crisfield with offshoots in each County. There will be a marketing plan that includes replacing the signs, collateral material, a website, and social media promotion. Ms. Carter will be working with the Maryland Department of Tourism and the Maryland Department of Transportation to coordinate these efforts. This project will take about 1-3 years to complete the rebranding and promotion.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Luff seconded by Ms. Gray and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

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