

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

April 6, 2016

Board Members Present: Bob Jacob, Cindy Genther, Shreyas Suresh, and Jim Luff

Board Members Absent: Dan MacLeod, Bob Ampula, Kate Gray, and Aaron Bramble

Also in Attendance: Commissioner William Short; Shelley Herman, County Administrator; Amy Moredock, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning; Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council, Mike Thielke, Executive Director, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

At 3:02 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. In the absence of a quorum Mr. Luff postponed the approval of the minutes from the March 3, 2016 meeting.

Ms. Moredock shared the Planning Commission has a full agenda for their meeting tomorrow. The most relevant project to the Commission would be the Dollar General preliminary site plan review. The public meeting was held in Worton and there were passionate opposition to the proposed project by a few and the remainder of the full house was relatively quiet. Commissioner Short felt it would be an important project for the Commission to weigh in on. Ms. Williams shared that she attended the meeting and was approached afterwards by an attendee who shared she was comfortable speaking for the project against those who spoke in opposition.

Mr. Thielke, gave a F3 Tech; Farm, Fish, Food Initiative presentation for the Eastern Shore region. Ms. Williams had viewed the presentation previously and was very enthusiastic about the initiative and requested Mr. Thielke present to the Commission. ESEC evaluated their business model and determined that the high growth, innovation start-ups were an appropriate focus for the region.

The F3 initiative provides an industry focus and regional strategy, to obtain funding for the type of start-ups that are particularly well suited for our area with the proximity and availability of water and farm land. Traditionally agriculture and seafood have been strengths and key economic contributors in our region. These two traditional economic contributors have huge environmental factors that are being mandated and regulated, encouraging innovation and technology in order to remain sustainable. Mr. Thielke gave a few examples of recent entrepreneurs that have developed environmentally friendly processes and products. This initiative will address food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture. The request requires no additional funding or staff time and to target some of what is already being done towards this effort and document the collaboration by means of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or resolution. Ms. Williams stated the regional effort was attractive and the environmental focus was equally attractive as we are surrounded on three sides by water and as a County we have committed to preserving our farm land. This initiative does not take away from any of the other industries identified as being important contributors to County's economy. Ms.

Herman shared that this opens doors for funding and collaboration of silos within the towns, counties, etc. Commissioner Short shared the need to get entrepreneurs on board with aquaculture, hydroponics, aquaponics and other innovative farming techniques. ESEC is willing to be the initiator and host the website for the concept and if it evolves, ESEC may or may not be the lead entity. Ms. Genter stated this is a messaging and marketing theme that communities can sign on to utilize and encourage entrepreneurial start-ups. Washington College's Center for Environment and Society (CES) was identified as a target partner for this initiative. Mr. Suresh recommended that the MOU or resolution be carefully worded to ensure other industries are not alienated by the focus. Ms. Genter offered this may also attract young people and retain our agricultural youth as well as the students at Washington College that are currently involved in the CES programs.

Ms. Genter gave an update on activities of the business community in Rock Hall as well as Rock Hall in general. In the month of March there were several items of interest and good publicity. Rock Hall was named number nine among the best Southern small towns in Southern Living magazine, one of the top ten beaches in Maryland, and two of the Bed and Breakfast's in Kent County were recognized among the top ten in Maryland. The Inn at Huntingfield Creek and the Brampton Bed and Breakfast Inn. The Maryland Municipal League presented Rock Hall with the Municipal Achievement award for the Trams. Rock Hall received the Sustainable Community designation in March. Rock Hall currently has a Main Street Committee that is looking to improve the business climate on Main Street. The Town of Rock Hall received a \$50,000.00 grant to study the waterfront. The Mayor and Council established a Waterfront Committee to develop a master plan that would review zoning, access to the water, needs, etc. The request for proposal was approved to select a consultant to work with the committee and develop the master plan.

Ms. Williams shared that Tammy Edwards, Senior Business Development Representative and Nina Lamba, Business Development Manager, Office of BioHealth and Life Sciences, Maryland Department of Commerce, along with herself and Mr. Luff visited ILSbio and Creafill Fibers earlier in the day. ILSbio is now operating in the newly renovated facility and the new building is designed to be much more efficient to suit the business model. ILSbio currently has twelve employees and was recently purchased by Bio Reclamation. The visit to Creafill Fibers was a meet and greet for Ms. Edwards and Ms. Lamba as they are listed in the BioMaryland Directory.

There is a list of trade shows that the Department of Commerce participates in and Ms. Edwards suggested she share them with the Commission to get their input.

Ms. Williams shared that she is scheduled to attend the next Town of Millington Mayor and Council meeting to reach out and discuss what activities have been taking place for Economic Development in Kent County. Particular interest to Millington is the 301 corridor as they would be impacted by growth in that area. The Middletown bypass is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018.

The Kent County and Washington College Innovation Internships participants were announced and shared the particulars of the internships. It is very important to connect the students with the community. There are 1,500 students here each year and we need to get word out about Kent County and the Eastern Shore region. Mr. Suresh asked about student interest at this time. Ms. Williams shared that the projects need to be defined by the businesses prior to Andrea Lange, Assistant Dean for Academic Initiatives, Washington College advertising the internship to the student population. This is an opportunity to allow the business community to have a part of preparing our youth for the workforce.

Mr. Luff shared that the Town of Chestertown approved the Enterprise Zone Application after some discussion about what was to be included within the Town. Ms. Williams shared that the map was resubmitted to the Maryland Department of Planning for confirmation and Carla Gerber, GIS Specialist, Planning, Housing, and Zoning, is working on updating the other maps.

Ms. Williams asked for input on Economic Development's request to participate in the Innovation Internship program. After a brief discussion, the Commission agreed that the Customer Relation Management software would be the best use of that internship. Mr. Suresh added that the business directory could also be included in that process. Mr. Luff also added that the intern focus on giving Kent County a view of how rural communities can best address economic development.

Commissioner Short shared that Creative Treatments, Inc. and Creative Treatments Shutters and Blinds is currently updating their business plan to open a retail portion of the business. They are currently exploring locations in downtown Chestertown. This would mean adding another employee for the retail business and another installer.

Mr. Jacob shared his experience in working with the Maryland Workforce Exchange website and how businesses can utilize the services offered. Tom Rider, Business Services Supervisor, Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation, Division of Workforce and Adult Learning, is the contact for businesses to post employment needs on the website.

Mr. Jacob requested the Commission review the meeting time with the Commission. Meeting times will be on the May agenda when we have more members present.

Ms. Williams shared that additional interest forms, to serve on the Economic Development Commission, have been received and the Commission decided to discuss when there is a quorum.

The meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, May 4, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

April 6, 2016
Page 4
EDAB Minutes

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator