

Economic Development Commission

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street, 3rd Floor

Chestertown, MD 21620

June 6, 2018

Commission Members Present: Rob Thompson, Jim Luff, Aaron Bramble, Cindy Genther, Tracey Williams, and Bob Jacob

Commission Members Absent: Kate Gray

Also in Attendance: Commissioner William Short and Shelley Heller, County Administrator

At 3:03 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. The previous meetings minutes were not ready for approval.

Jamie Williams introduced Jon M. Andes, Ed.D., Executive Director, Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium (ESMEC). Dr. Andes gave a presentation on the Economic Impact of Public Education at a Rural Maryland Council conference in late 2017. Ms. Williams invited Dr. Andes to speak to the Commission members. Dr. Andes shared his experience as a teacher, public education administrator, and college professor.

The ESMEC is one of the oldest collaboratives in the United States founded in 1986. The ESMEC is involved in a variety of activities which include an energy trust, health insurance, special education, teacher recruitment, leadership development, and Board of Education leadership development. The ESMEC Board is comprised of the nine superintendents of the Eastern Shore counties.

This topic is important because public school systems are one of the largest employers in rural areas, they have a significant economic impact, and they require tax funds to provide services. Economic success of a local community is directly tied to the public school system, and the destiny of a local community is determined by the quality of the public school system. BEACON, Salisbury University, conducted a study to identify the economic impact of public school systems on the Shore. The components of the study included results that were tangible, quantifiable, and intangible which included indirect community benefits. The results highlighted economic impact vs. tax dollars allocated and indicated an average 35% return on investment. Investment in public education and infrastructure has the greatest impact on the local economy. The complete report will be sent to everyone in attendance and will be posted on the Economic Development website for reference. The study will be updated in the fall of 2018 and Dr. Andes will return to present the updated information.

Jamie Williams inquired about the percentage of return on investment when the public-school system is not the largest employer in the county. Dr. Andes responded that the impact remains the same. Mr. Thompson asked if there was a point of diminishing return on the investment. Dr. Andes shared the only factor considered was where teachers live. Dr. Couch shared that first-year teachers are not living in Kent County, due to lack of housing choices.

Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology gave an update on the county fiber project, sharing that the 110-mile fiber-optic broadband network is complete and underground. The only exception was a surface laid application at the States Attorney office, a new innovative solution for delivering fiber. There are now 69 anchor sites being brought online. The County is continuing to research and identify homework hotspots to allow students access within their communities. Mr. Boone shared that Kent County has spoken to the White House Administration and to the Capitol Hill Broadband Caucus about the project.

Jamie Williams shared the Administrative Assistant position was approved for Economic Development, interviews were completed, and a recommendation is currently in Human Resources to go before the Commissioners for approval. Ms. Williams shared that the Maryland's Eastern Shore Intelligence Reports have been received and are now available. The Report was a collaboration with the nine counties on the Eastern Shore and was included in the March 2018 edition of Site Selection magazine.

There was a meeting with Wayne Morris, Acting Director, Public Works; Mark Williams, Owner/President, Earth Data; Susan O'Neill, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council; and Jamie Williams about the 301-corridor update. There are many completed reports and the Queen Anne's County Economic Impact study is being completed. Mr. Williams will review all the reports to determine a scope of work that will get the results desired and not duplicate previous efforts.

On motion by Mr. Bramble, seconded by Mr. Thompson the board agreed to meet on Wednesday, July 11, 2018, July 4th being a holiday.

Tracey Williams shared that in 2018 graduating Kent County seniors received \$5.9 million in scholarships.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Thompson seconded by Mr. Jacob and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:55 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, July 11, 2018, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator