

Economic Development Commission

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street, 3rd Floor

Chestertown, MD 21620

September 5, 2018

Commission Members Present: Bob Jacob, Cindy Genter, Jim Luff, Kate Gray, Rob Thompson, Tracey Williams, and Trae Hoffner

Commission Members Absent: Aaron Bramble

Also in Attendance: Commissioner William Short; Shelley Heller, County Administrator; Scott Boone, Director Information Technology; Amy Moredock, Director Planning, Housing, and Zoning

At 3:02 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the August 1, 2018, meeting. On motion by Ms. Genter and seconded by Ms. Williams, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the August 1, 2018 meeting.

Mr. Boone updated the Commission on the fiber project, sharing the homework hotspots, and plans to get students a hotspot at home at no charge. Mr. Boone discussed the new www.kenthotspots.com site and detailed the County locations that are now active with free public WiFi. Social media outlets and website updates were identified as the most effective way to educate the community about the new resources available. The Commission offered full support in sharing the information about the hotspots. Information Technology (IT) and Economic Development (ED) will work together to ensure updates are shared with the community. Security measures were detailed for the public Wi-Fi to ensure the safety of students using County hotspots. In addition, IT and ED will work on marketing private Wi-Fi that allows public access, i.e. McDonalds and Play It Again Sam's, soliciting assistance from the Towns in identifying those businesses and/or organizations.

Ms. Moredock shared the Board of Appeals rulings on August 20, 2018, on the poultry operation in Lynch and the school bus parking lot at the former Worton Elementary School, both final site plans were approved. The zoning text amendment for country inns will be heard at the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for September 6, 2018. A preliminary site approval application for expansion at the Brickyard Road location was received from Gillespie Precast for 16,000 square feet of production yard expansion space and will be heard at the September meeting. Ms. Moredock, Mr. Luff, and Jamie Williams met with a local business discussing home production of food products. Ms. Moredock shared that the Maryland Department of Transportation is coming to Kent County on October 2, 2018 to hear requests from the County for future transportation needs. Chestertown Boulevard will be a high priority item discussed during the visit. Mr. Luff asked Ms. Moredock a question regarding major subdivision development. Ms. Moredock answered that there have been no new developments since 2013. A discussion took place amongst the board regarding infrastructure expansion for residential and business development purposes. The Maryland Department of Transportation held an initial pre-tour meeting with Kent and Queen Anne's County and will be presenting to Kent County on October 2, 2018.

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There was a lengthy discussion about housing development in Kent County. The possibility of waiving water and sewer hookup fees to promote development was proposed.

Jamie Williams shared the WYPR interview with the Commission via email prior to the meeting. Rural healthcare, education, and diversity were the topics discussed. Ms. Williams discussed being realistic about healthcare in Kent County and what services can be provided by a local rural hospital. Ms. Williams shared that conditions in the community, the economy, not a lot of job opportunities, housing costs, and rentals for young professionals were shared in that interview as the struggles of public education in Kent County. Ms. Williams shared data that addressed some of the misconceptions shared during that interview. The school system is a vital component of economic development in any community. Test scores and the ratings of Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) need to be acknowledged and addressed in rooms such as this and not on social media. Any opportunity to speak to an audience outside of Kent County, should be used to highlight the positive things happening, i.e. the only county offering universal pre-k, number one in kindergarten readiness two years, one-to-one technology initiative, and number one in the percentage of students completing a Career and Technology Education program. Only, first, and best should be our focus and message to attract workers, residents, and businesses to Kent County. Ms. Williams referenced the comment by Karen Couch, Superintendent, KCPS, during the interview, because we are small, small improvements make huge differences. Ms. Genter advised that the Commission should be proactive in sharing data with the community whenever possible. Tracey Williams proposed housing information be compiled to share with professionals being recruited in Kent County. We need to change the narrative in Kent County and work together to address the challenges.

The Save the Hospital organization requested that support for the Certificate of Need (CON), being submitted by the University of Maryland for the new Easton hospital, only be submitted with conditions. Ms. Gray pointed out the decision is not do you support the hospital or not, it is at what level. The Commission, collectively, needs to determine what level of support they are willing to offer. Mr. Thompson questioned what is realistic in Kent County in attracting doctors and the importance of patients receiving the highest level of care despite where they receive that care. Ms. Genter shared the missing piece is the strategic plan, maintaining beds is not a plan. Identifying what can be done locally and done well for our community is necessary, geriatric care and telemedicine were a few suggestions. After a thoughtful discussion, the Commission concluded that they needed additional information and would like to hear directly from the University of Maryland, Shore Regional Health, and the Save the Hospital organization. Ms. Williams will reach out to both groups on behalf of the Commission.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Jacob, seconded by Ms. Gray and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 pm. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday October 3, 2018, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Director