

# *Economic Development Commission*

*The County Commissioners of Kent County*

*400 High Street*

*Chestertown, MD 21620*

**December 6, 2017**

Commission Members Present: Cindy Genther, Rob Thompson, Aaron Bramble, Shreyas Suresh, Kate Gray, and Bob Jacob

Commission Members Absent: Jim Luff, Tracey Williams, and Mary Ford

Also in Attendance: Bernadette Bowman, Director, Tourism Development; Kay MacIntosh, Economic Development & Marketing Coordinator, Chestertown Arts and Entertainment District/Chestertown Main Street; Tom Rider, Business Services Supervisor, Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Noah Gonzalez, Economic Development Intern

At 3:03 p.m. Mr. Jacob called the meeting to order.

Ms. Bowman shared that Tourism generated \$60 million in visitor expenditures in the 2016 calendar year. In 2016 Tourism contributed \$8.3 million in State and Local Taxes, providing 472 direct jobs, and \$6.1 million in lodging taxable rentals. The Tourism office markets the county and attracts tourists. The Tourism office activities include: working with Tourism partners to leverage the County's marketing funds through coop ads in What's Up Eastern Shore, Chesapeake Bay, and County Lines magazines, national magazine ads are done in conjunction with the State Department of Tourism; in house production of six brochures, included are the visitor guide and the calendar of events; maintain a media contact database provided to all partners; press releases are reviewed and input provided; active on social media channels; Tourism Attraction Corridor (TAC) signage program; a monthly e-newsletter; website with native content about the County; media relations, Mid Atlantic Tourism Public Relation Alliance (MATPRA) tourism offices pitch stories to travel writers. Ms. Bowman stated the primary market is approximately a 300-mile radius of Kent County. The target demographic is 30-65 year-olds. Kent County's Tourism season is April through November. Ms. Bowman stated, Tourism is Economic Development. Mr. Thompson questioned the limiting factors of people coming to Kent County. Ms. Bowman shared a Convention Center immediately comes to mind. It is a market we would like to target.

Ms. MacIntosh gave an update on her responsibilities and the direction of the Town's Main Street and Arts and Entertainment District. Ms. MacIntosh's title includes economic development and coordinates with Ms. Williams in that role for the Town. The bulk of the work is done through Main Street. The first role to be filled was the Arts and Entertainment District Manager; branding the district, creating the goddess Hebe mascot, etc. The next task was to revitalize the Main Street program. The decision was made to bring Arts and Entertainment under Main Street to be efficient and effective. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) provided a grant for strategic planning, as a result the Main Street Board has formulated their vision, mission and goals and will be voting on them at the next meeting. Priorities include people living downtown above storefronts and more restaurants. A conference

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hotel/destination boutique hotel (approximately 60 beds) was identified early on for economic vitality downtown. Conversations have begun and continue with interested hoteliers and property owners on or near the waterfront. It is possible that there could be an announcement within the next six months, if those talks continue. Another project includes grant funds for startup costs for a grease trap, commercial kitchen, etc. this would assist in getting additional restaurants downtown. Events are an important aspect of Main Street programs. The Dickens Christmas event was a great success and will continue next year. Cars on High was also a wonderful success getting a diverse crowd downtown. Ms. MacIntosh is the active party in the Save the Hospital charge and Ms. Williams supports those efforts for economic development in the Town and County. A grant from DHCD will provide funds to launch a facade improvement program that will be announced in January 2018. Main Street Chestertown received \$40,000 for the facade improvement program.

Mr. Jacob requested a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2017, meeting. On motion by Mr. Bramble and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the November 2, 2017, meeting.

Ms. Genter shared the origin of the Kent County, Economic Development, Welcome Presentation and Package. The presentation will be used as a template for businesses exploring the possibilities and doing business in Kent County. The slides were reviewed and will be updated accordingly. Ms. Genter shared Kent County is still in a “buyers’ market” meaning there is more than six months of inventory, homes available for sale. Mr. Jacob asked about property taxes in Kent County, Maryland versus Delaware. Ms. Genter shared they were comparable and taxes would be a great addition to the presentation.

Ms. Williams introduced and welcomed Mr. Gonzalez and shared her optimism that Mr. Gonzalez and Natalie Theriault will continue their internship through the 2018 spring semester. Mr. Gonzalez has been working on social media and marketing promotions with WKHs radio to build awareness of Kent County, Maryland. Promoting the quality of life and quality opportunities available in Kent County, Maryland. Ms. Theriault has been working on databases; compiling and organizing, contact information and data that has been obtained in the past three years for Kent County Economic Development.

Mr. Williams shared that Dr. Jon Andres, Executive Director, Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium, would be attending the February Economic Development Commission meeting and presenting the Economic Impact of Public Education. Ms. Williams attended a presentation at the 2017 Rural Summit hosted by the Rural Maryland Council. Several commission members recommended publishing the meeting in order that all interested groups and individuals could attend.

Ms. Williams shared the recent expansions and new businesses in the County, which include the in-progress Dixon Valve warehouse/distribution facility on Sheeler Road; completed Dixon Specialty Hose on Talbot Boulevard; in process LaMotte Company; anticipated Creafill Fibers; USA Fulfillment is needing additional space and workforce; in process Willards Agri-Service; anticipated Gillespie Precast; Mother Smucker Salsa exploring a move to commercial

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space; completed A Storage Depot; and in process Shore Distributors. Ms. Williams shared the new Dollar General stores in Worton (now open), and Millington (in process), provide a needed service to those communities. Ms. Genther suggested we produce an annual economic development update and offered her assistance. The report would assist in showcasing the economic development efforts in Kent County.

Mr. Bramble gave a liquor update, sharing there was a meeting with Robert Edler, Alcoholic Beverage Inspector, Ms. Williams, and himself. The game plan is to propose removing the 60/40 food to alcohol requirement in restaurants. Ms. Williams shared that the path of least resistance would be to tailor any modifications after other counties that have addressed similar obstacles. Once the proposal for this year's general assembly is finalized, the entire regulations will be reviewed to get ahead of the emerging trends.

Mr. Jacob shared reports about the fiber project he has been hearing in the community. Ms. Williams asked if Mr. Jacob has spoken with Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology. Ms. Williams will invite Mr. Boone to the January meeting to give an update on the fiber project.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Gray, seconded by Mr. Bramble, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:37 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams  
Coordinator