

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

**December 7, 2016**

Board Members Present: Cindy Genther, Kate Gray, Jim Luff, Bob Ampula, Aaron Bramble, Mary Ford, and Shreyas Suresh

Board Members Absent: Dan MacLeod, Bob Jacob

Also in Attendance:

At 3:02 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff shared that the November minutes would be presented for approval at the January meeting with the December minutes.

Garrett Falcone, Executive Director, Heron Point reviewed a Power Point presentation that explained that Heron Point is an affiliate of Acts Retirement Life Communities. Acts is the largest not-for-profit owner, operator, and developer of continuing care retirement communities in the United States. Heron Point opened in 1991 and affiliated with Acts in 2010. Heron Point employs 212 full time, part-time, and per diem employees and 75% of the employees live in Kent County. Mr. Falcone is a member of the Rural Healthcare Commission and shared the importance of retaining services at the Chestertown Hospital facility. There is a need for an ongoing shuttle bus service for residents and staff. Continued improvement in the local education system is important to continue recruitment of employees. Continuing the support of businesses locating and expanding in Kent County and waterfront improvements are also important to Heron Point. Ms. Genther asked if Heron Point was able to expand in the Town of Chestertown. Mr. Falcone shared that they are land locked at the current location. Ms. Williams shared the Heron Point property is the second highest property tax revenue generator in Kent County second to Delmarva Power.

Jean Fabi, Acting Economic Development Director, Queen Anne's County shared the current activities in Queen Anne's County. Ms. Fabi shared that Queen Anne's County is growing. A large percentage of residents migrate out of the county to work. Ms. Fabi shared a couple of recent business expansions. Ms. Fabi shared that the growing trends include advanced manufacturing, healthcare, agri-tourism, and tourism sectors. Queen Anne's County recently held a job fair, the first one since 2008. Ms. Fabi confirmed that the school system is a major attraction for Queen Anne's County. The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, Tastiest Catch Campaign is underway. Queen Anne's County is currently working on broadband deployment. Ms. Fabi is working on the adaptive reuse for the Sudlersville Middle School building that is currently vacant. Ms. Fabi shared that regionally we have a need for a work shed study to better understand what employers' needs are. Transportation is an issue. Ms. Fabi also shared the regional marketing efforts with the other mid and upper shore counties. Queen Anne's and Kent have both held registration events for the Maryland Property Assessed Clean

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Energy program and invited contractors from the region. Queen Anne's County recently applied for designation of an Enterprise Zone.

Ms. Williams requested a decision from the Commission members in regard to proposing legislation to enact a Commerce Zone Tax Credit. On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Ms. Gray the Commission unanimously recommended sending a favorable recommendation to the Commissioners to request legislation during the upcoming General Assembly. Ms. Williams asked for a volunteer to assist in making a recommendation to the Commissioners to present to the delegation. Ms. Gray will assist with the proposal.

Ms. Judy Morgan, Director of Sales, Think Big Networks, shared that the Grand Opening was a success and thanked those that were able to attend and invited others to stop in. FTS has received approval to cross railroads and is moving forward with construction. The customer agreements allow Think Big to know where customers are, know they are interested, and then Think Big can plan construction and deployment efficiently. Ms. Morgan shared that businesses are being visited with and they are sharing how access to reliable broadband service will help their business. Statistics show that having access to fiber increases property values by eight percent. Installation of fiber to the home is future proofed infrastructure. Once the glass is in the tube, hardware on either end can change; the infrastructure will not. Ms. Williams shared that natural gas infrastructure has been deployed by the community members getting involved and creating the demand by sharing information with their neighbors. Ms. Morgan shared that a few neighborhoods have done just that successfully. Telephone, television, and internet are all available with fiber service to the home. Ms. Cooper shared that seasonal businesses will be given consideration. Internet may not be a reason to come to an area; however it is a reason to leave early and not return. Ms. Genter invited Ms. Cooper to a future Greater Rock Hall Business Association meeting.

Ms. Williams shared additional information obtained about recent business closures. Ms. Williams shared some of the new openings and expansions in Kent County.

Ms. Williams shared the Chester River Wellness Alliance, Women In Business, and Young Professionals of Kent County groups are still active and Kent County is supportive of their efforts.

Mr. Ampula shared that he had incorporated all the comments on the google document for the update to the 2013 Economic Development Plan. Mr. Ampula questioned what data should be used for the update. Mr. Luff shared that the goals and strategies are the most important components of the plan. It was suggested by Ms. Gray that we plan a completely separate meeting for about four hours when all members are able to attend. Ms. Williams will send out a poll to schedule a date and time.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Ampula, seconded by Ms. Gray, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:40 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, January 4, 2017, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams

Coordinator