



Recordings of the Economic and Tourism Development Commission meetings can be found on the Meeting Archive Tab.

April 12, 2023

Commission Members Present: Tracey Williams, Aaron Bramble, Rob Thompson, Richard Story, Sandy Scott, Paula Reeder, and Charlie Athey

Also in Attendance: Jamie Williams, Director, Dawson Hunter, Housing and Transportation Coordinator, Shalyn Boulden, Tourism Manager, Katie Wright, Economic Development Manager, Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development; Commissioner Price; and Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning

At 3:02 p.m. Mr. Bramble called the meeting to order.

At 3:03 p.m., at the request of Mr. Bramble, a motion was made by Mr. Athey, seconded by Mr. Story, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2023, meeting.

Mr. Mackey advised that the following items were discussed at the Technical Advisory Committee meeting that was held earlier this morning: Major Site Plans for Everton Industrial (Preliminary), Minor Site Plan (Preliminary) for Kitty Knight Inn, and Land Use Ordinance revisions in preparation to file legislation.

Jamie Williams advised that the joint public hearing with the Town of Betterton was held on the proposed Enterprise Zone Application for Worton and Betterton. The Town of Betterton voted on their resolution last night and will complete the application that will be mailed to the Department of Commerce by Friday. Incentives include real property and income tax credits to businesses to locate or expand in the Enterprise Zone.

Ms. Boulden advised that Spring marketing is in full swing with tv, print, digital, and radio. She advised that she and Mr. Hunter filmed a segment of Midday Maryland with Channel 2, WMAR, that will air on April 19th at noon. Jamie Williams and Ms. Boulden coordinated a shoot with Washington Post last week for Upper Bay Best Bets which is a collaboration of Kent, Cecil, and Harford Counties. Areas visited included Bespoke Chocolate, Cross Street Market, Play It Again Sam's, and Deep Blue at Kitty Knight House. The team is updating the Visitor's Guide. The updated digital version is expected to be complete by Memorial Day weekend.

Ms. Wright advised that yesterday was the final meeting of the review committee for the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) Micro Ag Grant. Nine applications were selected to receive funding. Categories of the projects included: strategic marketing campaigns, technology innovation or implementation, capital improvements for business expansion or valued added production, research projects, or animal welfare improvements. Awardees will be announced later and Ms. Wright will share

a matrix from the past three years to show the businesses that have been assisted through the USRC Micro Ag Grants. Ms. Wright advised that the IT department is working on the business mentorship program webpage and finalizing the format. Biographies are being collected from all that will be serving as mentors for that program. Ms. Wright and Jamie Williams will be attending the 2023 MEDA Annual Conference on April 23 – 25 and will have the opportunity to network with the new Secretaries and as a sponsor of the conference, Kent County will have a booth.

Last week, Ms. Wright, Jamie Williams, Mr. Mackey, and Nancy LaJoice, Maryland Department of Commerce met with Everton Industrial to share incentives from the County and State they could potentially utilize. They are seeking incentives for the developer as well as the potential businesses that would lease the space.

Mr. Hunter advised that he is still working to add affordable housing to the County and working with the owner of the Washington Square shopping center. There are plans through the Town of Chestertown to develop approximately 20, second and third-floor apartments. He is still working with Frank Hodgetts, Home, Partnerships Inc. on the senior housing project in Millington. He advised that Mr. Hodgetts is looking into the possibility of offering housing in Rock Hall that would serve as teacher or senior housing. Mr. Hunter advised that there is currently affordable housing available in Chestertown, as Brookmeadow I and II have completed their renovations and now have apartments available for rent for families and singles. Information was pushed out on social media to increase public awareness.

Mr. Hunter advised that the seasonal shuttle would start on May 26th and will run through October 15th. Marketing for the shuttle services has begun and support has been received from the Town of Chestertown and the Town of Rock Hall as well as local businesses. The State legislature has awarded an additional \$300,000 in support to the Maryland Rural Council. In a vote two weeks ago, it was decided that the additional funding would be dedicated to non-emergency medical transportation. Mr. Hunter advised that the Maryland Rural Development Corporation has an office in Chestertown and is focusing on financing, budget, and education in helping first-time home buyers. It is challenging because the approved mortgage amounts are very limiting, especially in Kent County.

Jamie Williams advised that Mr. Hunter's position was created under the Local Management Board to do a needs assessment. It became obvious that affordable housing and transportation were a priority and needs to be addressed. An FY2024 budget request for a Special Projects Manager position was submitted. Focusing on affordable housing, transportation, and special projects that the County Commissioners assign. He will be working with developers and landowners to focus on affordable and multi-family housing. Ms. Reeder made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thompson, and unanimously approved sending a letter of support to the County Commissioners for Special Projects Manager.

A roundtable discussion was held to brainstorm ideas for business attraction. A complete list of the ideas is attached.

Mr. Bramble advised Mr. Story's term is up and he is eligible for reappointment. A motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded by Ms. Reeder, and passed unanimously to recommend to County Commissioners' reappointment of Mr. Story to the ETDC.

Mr. Bramble advised that the Nominating Committee is currently reviewing interest forms. Mr. Thompson's term expired at the end of March. A recommendation will be presented at the next meeting to be voted on and forwarded to the County Commissioners for consideration.

Mr. Bramble requested Mr. Mackey review the proposed Zoning Text Amendment, to increase building heights on employment center and industrial zoned properties on the 301 corridor. Mr. Mackey advised that the full staff report and proposal are online for review. Mr. Mackey advised that the proposal was submitted in part as an effort to "clean up" the definition of the zoning in the 301 corridor. The current building height is 45' and the proposal would raise the height to 60'. Mr. Mackey advised that the proposal was not brought forth by a particular landowner or developer. It was submitted by the County Commissioners. Mr. Athey made a motion for the ETDC to send a letter of support to the County Commissioners; the motion was seconded by Mr. Story and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Price gave an update from the Commissioners' meeting regarding the Wi-Fi problems experienced during past Tea Party Festivals. He advised that a request was made by the Tea Party Festival Committee to the Town of Chestertown for \$5,000 and a request to the County for \$10,000 to resolve the Wi-Fi issues for this upcoming Festival. He advised that Scott Boone, Director, IT for the County, will be working with the Town of Chestertown on a permanent resolution to the public Wi-Fi problem.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bramble, seconded by Mr. Story, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:30 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director