



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

August 7, 2024

Commission Members Present: Dick Story, Paula Reeder, Sandy Scott, Judy Crow, David Bowman, and Judy Gifford.

Commission Member Absent: Charlie Athey.

Also in Attendance: Jamie Williams, Director, Katie Abbott, Economic Development Manager; Shalyn Boulden, Tourism Manager and Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development.

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Story called the meeting to order. Mr. Story requested a motion to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2024, meeting. On a motion by Ms. Reeder, seconded by Mr. Bowman, the July 10, 2024, minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Story requested Ms. Reeder and Ms. Osborn to share their experience attending the Maryland Economic Development Association's (MEDA) Basic Course, which was a week-long virtual course. Ms. Reeder advised that the course was a very worthwhile, 5-day intensive course on the fundamentals of economic development, including strategic planning, finance, Business Retention and Expansion, marketing, and neighborhood unity. Ms. Reeder shared that it was an opportunity to network with people all around the world and she particularly enjoyed the group exercise at the end of the course to pitch a location in our local area suitable for an unknown prospect. Ms. Osborn noted that she was the last of the staff to complete this course. Mr. Story advised that there are scholarships available to take the course and that MEDA membership is a requirement.

Jo Manning, Town Manager, Town of Millington shared details of current and proposed projects. The Millington Senior Village (former Millington Elementary School) property has been annexed into the Town and subdivided into six parcels. Three parcels will be for senior housing (52 apartments, 62 or older) with two units ADA accessible. Rent will range from \$390-\$1,046 and 80% of the apartments will be for low to moderate income. There are thirty-eight people on the waiting list. They plan to break ground in October or November for the underground infrastructure and the housing units should be completed by the summer of 2025. The former school building will be a Community Resource Center and should be completed by 2026.

The Town's existing Wastewater Treatment Plant is permitted for 105,000 gpd, which at the current time will not allow for additional development as proposed along the 301 corridor. The Town and Kent County Public Works are coordinating the construction of a regional plant, decommissioning the existing plant located in a flood zone, and upgrading the plant from a BNR (bacterial nutrient removal) system to an ENR (enhanced nutrient removal) system. The initial feasibility study has been completed, negotiations for the purchase of land for the new plant are ongoing, and discussions are ongoing with the

Maryland Department of the Environment regarding permitting, movement of the outfall location, and design of the new plant.

Kent County received approval from the State of Maryland to license one dispensary in 2024. The awarded application was submitted for a store in Millington. The current licensee plans to renovate the abandoned Truist Bank building (at the corner of Cypress & Sassafras Streets) and open a dispensary sometime in 2025. This type of business is required to collect 9% sales tax, a tax that is to be shared with the County and the municipality in which the business is located. Millington is working with the licensee regarding zoning, parking requirements, sign requirements, and security requirements.

Millington is working with a new business owner to open a behavioral therapist office on Sassafras Street. This new business plans to work with Social Services and the Board of Education to aid parents struggling with their children's behavior. There is a potential for approximately five new employees.

Due to the increase in development proposals and development along the 301 corridor, Millington will need to construct a second water tower and plant. Millington is working with USDA and Kent County Public Works to complete a feasibility study and pursue funding. Ms. Manning advised that she has a close working relationship with Ms. Williams and her staff, working together on these projects. The Town currently needs a grant manager and project manager. Zoning has been updated to allow for more businesses to open on vacant properties in the Town of Millington.

Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Director, Kent County Local Management Board (LMB) gave an overview of the LMB and the Maryland Model. The purpose of the LMB is to convene partners and align efforts, fund solutions and evaluate local investments that improve systems, services and programs for Kent County youth and families. The LMB is mandated to have a Community Plan which includes all the agencies on the local care team. The current plan is expiring and work on developing the new plan will begin in the next three weeks. Ms. Granillo advised that the LMB aligns with the Kent County Economic and Tourism Development Strategic Plan in Cultivating Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction, Workforce Development and Education; Live, Work & Visit; and Infrastructure.

Ms. Granillo gave an overview of the ENOUGH Act, sharing that it was passed during this past legislative session and is a \$15M allocation to address community poverty, \$10M will be to address specific geographical regions around the State through place-based community revitalization projects. Kent County is not geographically eligible for these funds. The remaining \$5M has been set aside for Local Management Boards capacity building grants to mirror the same theory of change. Ms. Granillo advised that they will be starting their community needs assessment through Everyday Canvassing, a contracted service out of Montgomery County. They will start in Chestertown, asking "What would make Chestertown the best place to be a kid? They will then move on to other Kent County communities.

Ms. Reeder expressed her concerns that the County has a growing homeless problem that is not being addressed by the County or State government. Ms. Reeder inquired whether the LMB could be a focal point in organizing an approach to homelessness. Ms. Granillo advised that homelessness is a central concern for the LMB Board and feels that the role of the LMB is to help coordinate efforts by those who are passionate about the issue to see where they can complement each other rather than duplicate efforts. Ms. Granillo shared that the LMB's active care team is researching what resources are available to get families housed. Ms. Reeder expressed her concerns with the homelessness issue in Kent County, that it is going to reach a point where it will begin to affect tourism and economic development. Ms. Reeder

shared that she felt the County and local municipalities needed better communication regarding the matter. She shared that she thought an appropriate role for the ETDC should be to encourage the County Commissioners and the municipalities to convene on the matter.

Ms. Williams shared that staff was preparing for the Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference scheduled for August 14 – 17, 2024. The Kent County booth will focus on winter tourism, hunting, fishing, oystering, birding, Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, and arts and culture. Showing that there is always something to do in Kent County. Youth Apprenticeship webinar was held earlier in the afternoon, 28 people registered and 15 attended.

Ms. Williams advised that letters are going out from the Office of Finance for the new Short-term Rental software, the system is scheduled to be live on Friday, August 9, 2024. Payments are due on August 21, 2024, for July rentals.

Input was received from Ms. Reeder on the Business Sentiment and BRE Visits' questions to uniformly collect and report on data. These recommendations will be consolidated with the current questions as previously discussed with Commission members. Ten HubSpot forms were sent out to businesses to test, this only included the business profile, not the questions. Three have responded and we have updated the form based on those responses. The team will follow up on the other seven and schedule in-person visits. Commission members will be invited to attend. Ms. Williams and Ms. Abbott will be generating a business list for distribution to members to help identify any businesses that may not be on our radar.

Ms. Williams attended the Upper Shore Regional Planning Roundtable, thanks to an invitation from Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning. Discussions included housing, accessory dwelling units, land use preemption, and more. All five of the municipalities in Kent County are sustainable communities and are urged to maintain that designation to qualify for many State funding programs.

Ms. Gifford inquired about entrepreneurial training opportunities and what Kent County offers. She also inquired about training on the Delmarva Index and how to use that data.

Guests scheduled for the September ETDC Meeting will be David Foster, Mayor of Chestertown and John Carroll, Mayor of Galena.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Ms. Scott and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:32 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director