



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

**November 15, 2023**

Commission Members Present: Aaron Bramble, Paula Reeder, Judy Gifford, Richard Story, and David Bowman

Commission Members Absent: Sandy Scott and Charlie Athey

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

At 3:01 p.m. Mr. Bramble called the meeting to order. Mr. Bramble requested a motion to approve the minutes from the October 11, 2023, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Story, seconded by Ms. Reeder, the October 11, 2023, minutes were unanimously approved.

Gail Owings, Executive Director, Eastern Shore Heritage, Inc. (ESHI), the managing entity of the [Stories of Chesapeake Heritage Area](#) advised that our Heritage Area is one of thirteen in the State of Maryland, encompassing four counties and twenty-one municipalities. Formed in 1999 and certified in 2005. The purpose was to make the region a primary travel destination, to improve the economy of the region through the enhancement of facilities associated with our natural, cultural, and historical resources and promote the preservation and stewardship of those resources. ESHI empowers their partners such as businesses, nonprofits, and historical societies to tell their story and help to make their project happen.

ESHI offers grant programs and have given grants to forty-five partners in Kent County and One Hundred Twenty-five across the four counties:

- 1) Small Grant up to \$5,000 (total of \$25,000 granted annually), typically for brochures, research, or festivals.
- 2) MD Heritage Area Authority Grant through the State of Maryland to non-profits and Counties up to \$50,000 for programming and up to \$100,000 for capital projects.

These two grants alone have brought over \$1M to Kent County. Recipients include the Bordley building, Kent Cultural Alliance building, Sumner Hall, The Customs House, Rosenwald School in Coleman, Most Precious Blood building in Betterton, the Garfield, Sultana, the Lawrence Wetlands Center, the Chestertown Marina building, the Rock Hall Museum, Kent Historical Society, River Arts, Echo Hill, Town of Millington, Town of Betterton, Watermen's Museum, Kent Museum, Turner's Creek, and Town of Rock Hall. In addition, three documentaries were funded: Kent County's Storied Landscape and two on Trappe.

ESHI offers capacity building through workshops such as grant writing, how to tell your story, social media, coastal hazards, beyond the ramp, nothing about me without me, volunteer, rehabilitation, tax credits and design and interpretation made easy.

Ms. Owings advised that ESHI is working on their 5-Year Strategic Plan and determining what their focus should be. They receive their funding primarily through a matching grant from the Maryland State Heritage Authority and can receive up to \$100,000 each year. She shared that since 2008, they have not been eligible for the full amount of funding due to the lack of a match. Ms. Owings added that ESHI also receives funding from each of the member counties, the Town of Easton, Town of Chestertown, and the Town of Betterton. They are undertaking a national heritage area feasibility study. National designation brings additional resources. The federal funding can serve as the match for the State funding. It is anticipated that the study will be complete by summer 2024 and projected boundaries of the designation would be from Dorchester County up to Chesapeake City.

Ms. Owings shared that we have two All American Roads within our Heritage Area: The Underground Railroad All American Road that runs through Caroline and Dorchester Counties, and The Chesapeake Country All American Road that runs from Cecil County down to Crisfield. The Interpretive plan has just been completed with a new logo of the canvas back duck. The Plan is to position the Byway as a gateway to the region and an introduction, geographically and physically, to our historic culture.

Ms. Williams advised that she attended the Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit. Ms. Owings added that ESHI's Byway Interpretive Plan received an award at the Summit. Ms. Williams and Ms. Osborn attended the Rural Maryland Council Summit and there was great presence by Kent County. Ms. Williams advised that she has emailed a list of the current projects that the department is working on and could answer any questions about any of the projects.

Ms. Osborn gave a brief update on the short-term rental project, advising that the County Commissioners, at their October 31, 2023, meeting, approved funding for utilizing a software program to identify, monitor, and collect the hotel rental taxes. We are working through the County's procurement process and have drafted Memorandums of Understanding with the Municipalities, local legislation, and procedures for review by the Office of Finance, the County Attorney, and the County Administrator.

Ms. Wright shared that she will be meeting with Upper Shore Regional Council, Cecil County, Queen Annes County, and the prospective mentors to define the process for assigning interested individuals and businesses to mentors and how to onboard new mentors. Once that is complete, the [Business Mentoring Program](#) will officially launch. Ms. Wright advised that information regarding the [Incumbent Worker Training Fund](#) has been posted on the website.

Ms. Wright shared that she attended the County Commissioners meeting on November 14, 2023, to accept the official proclamation recognizing this week, November 13 – 19, 2023, as National Apprenticeship Week. Eric Lemon, Manufacturing Training Manager with Dixon Valve was also in attendance for the proclamation. In addition to recognizing Dixon's apprenticeship program, Chesapeake CNC and Greenscapes apprenticeship programs were also shared on social media.

Ms. Wright advised that the office is currently working on the End of Year Update for Kent County's Brief Economic Facts for the Maryland Department of Commerce, and compiling our Enterprise Zone information for Commerce's Annual Report.

Ms. Williams shared that she and Ms. Boulden have secured quotes for the cleaning of hotDesks and we are exploring funding options.

Ms. Williams advised that WBOC filmed Nina Fleegle, Executive Director, Main Street Historic Chestertown, and John Schratwieser, Director, Kent Cultural Alliance, at the White Swan Inn on November 14, 2023, to promote Dickens of a Christmas on Delmarva Life. This was a free spot that will air on November 20, 2023.

Ms. Williams advised that Ms. Boulden completed the Maryland Office of Tourism, Economic Development Administration, grant application for \$112,000 for tourism development and that Ms. Boulden will be attending the Pittsburgh Travel Show with Upper Bay Best Bets a partnership with Harford and Cecil Counties.

Ms. Williams advised that the Next Generation Scholars will be at the County Government Building with Aundra Anderson on November 28, 2023, and will be meeting with the County Commissioners.

Mr. Bramble advised that his term expires on December 31, 2023. The membership committee will meet and send a recommendation via email to be voted on at the December meeting to be forwarded to the County Commissioners for consideration.

Ms. Gifford advised that Kent Conservation and Preservation Alliance received the Smart Growth Award from Preservation Maryland.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Mr. Story, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD  
Director