

Economic Development Commission

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street

Chestertown, MD 21620

September 7, 2016

Board Members Present: Dan MacLeod, Cindy Genther, Kate Gray, Jim Luff, Bob Jacob, Bob Ampula, and Shreyas Suresh

Board Members Absent: Aaron Bramble

Also in Attendance: Amy Moredock, Director, Planning, Zoning, and Housing; Shelley Heller, County Administrator

At 3:05 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the August 3, 2016 meeting. On motion by Ms. Genther and seconded by Ms. Gray the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the August 3, 2016 meeting.

Mr. Luff shared information on the meeting with the Small Business Administration and the Internal Revenue Service. Links will be added to the Economic Development website for businesses to access information that relates to their business and industry. The SBA loan guarantee process was discussed and Mr. Ampula shared that only one bank on the Eastern Shore participates. In the past three to five years only one SBA loan has been completed on the Eastern Shore.

The Commission discussed the Comprehensive Plan update and how that updates may be consistent with the Economic Development Plan. The vision of the County was discussed and how the Economic Development Plan should reflect the ultimate goal. The County Commissioners set the vision for the County and delegate to the Planning Commission the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the review of projects for consistency with the Land Use Ordinance and Comp Plan. Ms. Moredock explained community input is essential to the Comp Plan update process. County residents ultimately establish the Comp Plan vision. The Commission members agreed that their role is to send a recommendation to the Commissioners of what the County should look like economically. Ms. Gray shared that statistics are subjective and in some cases inaccurate, so should be included with care and with consistency. Mr. Ampula pointed out that statistics do represent a point in time, and the trends are more important.

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to provide the guiding County vision and the strategies and goals to meet that vision. Mr. Luff questioned who would be responsible to conduct the SWOT analysis listed as a strategy under the goal of support existing business. Ms. Moredock stated that would be something the Economic Development Commission would be expected to coordinate.

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After much discussion about particular wording, Ms. Moredock pointed out that the Plan must be looked at comprehensively. Mr. Ampula stated incubators and innovation centers should be included in our plans to capitalize on the one gigabit internet connectivity. He emphasized the value of attracting bio science companies given Washington College's Center for Environment and Society. Mr. Ampula suggested the elder population should be supported by addressing housing and other services to meet that growing population's needs. He also suggested focusing on businesses that take advantage of our natural resources (especially the birding sites in Kent County).

Mr. Jacob shared that our local high school Career Technical Education programs should include basic manufacturing concepts, given the impact of manufacturing in the County.

Ms. Moredock requested the Commission consolidate comments through Ms. Williams to be presented to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Luff asked how the Commission wanted to proceed with the update to the economic development plan. A working group was designated to consist of Mr. Ampula, Ms. Genther, and Mr. MacLeod. The group will begin drafting an updated plan.

Mr. Jacob asked about the Washington College Innovation Internship program. Mr. Suresh shared that Professor Andrea Lange is actively recruiting students to fill the positions advertised.

CLOSED SESSION, HUMAN RESOURCES

At 4:24 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Genther, seconded by Mr. Ampula, and carried unanimously to go into closed session to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more individuals in accordance with State Government Article, General Provisions §3-305(b)(1) of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, was also in attendance.

Topic to be discussed: The performance of the Economic Development Coordinator.

In closed session, the performance of the Economic Development Coordinator was discussed.

At 4:59 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Genther, seconded by Ms. Gray and carried by unanimously to adjourn the closed session.

A motion was made by Ms. Gray, seconded by Mr. Ampula to adjourn the meeting.

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There being no further business, the Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, October 5, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator