

# *Kent County Economic Development Commission*

*The County Commissioners of Kent County*

*400 High Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor*

*Chestertown, MD 21620*

**Audio recordings of the Economic Development Commission meetings can be found at <https://www.kentcounty.com/economic-development/board-meetings> click on the ‘Audio Recordings Tab’.**

**June 3, 2020**

Commission Members Present: Jim Luff, Cindy Genther, Kate Gray, Rob Thompson, Aaron Bramble, Dick Story

Commission Members Absent: Tracey Williams and Brendan Jones

Also in Attendance: Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning; Jamie Williams, Director, Economic Development; and Emily McCoy, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development

At 3:03 p.m. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the March 4, 2020 meeting. On motion by Mr. Story and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the March 4, 2020 meeting.

Wendy Bronfien, Curio Wellness, provided a general overview of Curio Wellness and their planned expansion into Kent County. The company plans to locate on agricultural land to build a 30,000 square foot warehouse and a 40,000 square foot greenhouse with a 5,000 square foot supplemental base space. Employment opportunities include a minimum wage of \$16.00/hr. and full benefits; the company plans to add 100 jobs within the first 2 years. Construction employment will be separate. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve a letter of support to the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission for the expansion into Kent County. On motion by Mr. Bramble and seconded by Mr. Story, the Commission unanimously approved a letter of support for Curio Wellness to expand into Kent County.

Mr. Mackey provided an overview of the recent public meetings and upcoming initiatives. Mr. Mackey shared:

- The Commissioners approved data centers as an approved use in the industrial, commercial, employment center, and village zoning districts.
- The Delta Heights project bill was approved to allow multi-family residential on agricultural land provided the structures were built prior to 1989. The property owner is going through subdivision to enable affordable housing accessibility to county residents and to enable FHA/USDA loans to be issued on the properties.
- A consultant has been selected for the comprehensive rezoning process.
- A bill to allow directional signs off roadways has been proposed. The proposed bill would allow signs to direct traffic to businesses that are not visible from the road. The planning commission gave an unfavorable recommendation.
- Microbrewery bill to allow microbreweries as an accepted use has been proposed.

Kate Gray provided an update on the Chestertown Business Campus. The distribution center is up and running. The headquarters office building is almost complete, expect staff in the new building at the end of June/early July. Initial stages of construction on the manufacturing building have begun, overall construction may be delayed due to COVID-19. Expected

completion 18 months. The YMCA building will go up and be on the corner of Haacke Drive and Scheeler Road. Construction expected to commence in the fall of 2020.

Jamie Williams shared:

- Maryland Department of Transportation is working on grant proposal for the reconstruction of portions of railroad located near Eastman Chemical. MDOT has requested a letter of support. This project would decrease truck traffic through Chestertown and Galena. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve a letter of support for the grant application. On motion by Ms. Genter and seconded by Mr. Story, the Commission unanimously approved a letter of support.
- Small Business COVID-19 Emergency Grant Fund – 129 applications were received. 6 applicants did not qualify. 35 applicants had already received funding. 3 applicants pulled their applications. Submitted 69 grant approvals to ESEC for check issuance. An additional 3 applications are approved and ready to be forwarded and 4 applications are pending.
- Strategic Plan Update - documentation has been posted to the website; other portions of the plan are temporarily on hold.
- Hannah Kinne has joined the team as our intern for the summer.
- April unemployment rate is 9.8% for Kent County.
- Demonstration of upgraded Kent County Parcel Map Viewer.
- Kent County has a new logo.
- Kent County Budget annual public hearing was held and is expected to be approved next week.
- Cecil County is leading an agriculture micro-grant program, an application is being submitted to the Upper Shore Regional Council. It will serve Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties.

Ms. Williams shared the Emsi Labor Market & Target Industry Analysis Reports. Ms. Williams highlighted that it was a regional report.

On May 7, 2020 SB397/HB1339 Sales and Use Tax and Personal Property Tax for data centers became law without the Governor's signature. A small group meeting will be scheduled to discuss marketing and identification of locations suitable for data center attraction.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Story, seconded by Mr. Bramble and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:08 pm. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, July 1, 2020 at 3:00 pm in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CECD  
Director