

Economic Development Advisory Board

The County Commissioners of Kent County

400 High Street

Chestertown, MD 21620

December 2, 2015

Board Members Present: Bob Ampula, Kate Gray, Aaron Bramble, Cindy Genter, Bob Jacob, Shreyas Suresh, and Jim Luff

Board Members Absent: Dan MacLeod

Also in Attendance: William Short, Commissioner, Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC), Loretta Lodge, Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce, Ron Hawkins, RBI Business Mentor, TEDCO, Shelley Herman, County Administrator, Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology, Nina Fleegle, Chair, and Conner Fleegle, Board Member, Young Professionals of Kent County, MD and Kay MacIntosh, Economic Development and Marketing Coordinator, Town of Chestertown, and Manager, Arts & Entertainment District

At 3:00 p.m. the meeting convened. Mr. Luff called the meeting to order.

Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the October 7, 2015 meeting. On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Ms. Gray the Board unanimously approved the minutes from the October 7, 2015 meeting. Mr. Luff requested a motion to approve the minutes from the November 4, 2015 meeting. Mr. Ampula shared that the working group for Economic Impact should only include Mr. Jacob, Ms. Williams, and himself. On motion by Ms. Genter and seconded by Mr. Ampula the Board unanimously approved the minutes from the November 4, 2015 meeting with the approved clarification.

Mr. Boone gave a broadband update, sharing the County has been working with the Department of Interior to have the use restrictions relaxed on the Tolchester property. Currently recreation is the only permitted use, previously a request was sent to erect a cell phone tower and it was denied. Congressman Harris' office has been contacted for assistance and is also working on other ideas. Mr. Boone shared that the final step of the internal process, in the fiber build out will be finalized within the next week.

Nina Fleegle, Chair and Conner Fleegle, Board Member, Young Professionals of Kent County, MD (YPKC) gave some background of the organization. This is the newest iteration of an organized group of young professionals in Kent County. The group formalized with Sam Shoge being elected to the Chestertown Town Council. This version of the young professionals merged the ideas and needs identified by Councilman Shoge and Ms. Fleegle. Professional development, networking, and service, were a few of the objectives identified by the group. Ms. Lodge, worked with the group to determine the best way to administer the business end of the organization. Ultimately the group partnered with the Chamber for financial, insurance, and guidance. The group currently has 260 members from the Chestertown area and Northern Queen Anne's County. The age range is twenty-one to young at heart, currently there are no dues. Mr. Ampula asked if SCORE could be of any assistance to the group and further invited

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the members of the YPKC to join SCORE. A SCORE subchapter was discussed as a means to diversify the SCORE mentors available to young professionals. Ms. Fleege discussed the need for a comprehensive way to make connections within the community. One of the first tasks of the YPKC was to create a cheat sheet for new young professionals to the area that identified services, things to do, etc. Ms. Williams shared that local businesses have a need for social media outreach assistance and perhaps the YPKC could offer those services as a fund raising activity. Ms. Williams also shared that the other two business associations would be a great place to reach out to young professionals in other parts of the County. Mr. Ampula shared that SCORE can provide workshops for the YPKC if they survey the members to determine what types of workshops would be of value. Ms. Fleege shared that social media, email, and the website have been the best way to get the word out about the organization and events. The group has been meeting on Wednesdays at J.R.'s Past Time Pub and the next meeting is being planned for January. Ms. Fleege shared that young business owners have identified workforce as an issue in this area. It was apparent very early on, that most members of the YPKC are here by choice and what was needed for other young people was a reason to stay.

Ms. MacIntosh shared that she is in the process of developing an Advisory Board for the Arts & Entertainment District. Another part of her job is reviving the Main Street program. The final piece is Economic Development for the Town and she is partnering with the County and determining where we can coordinate efforts. Ms. MacIntosh shared that going into this job she is also focused on avoiding redundancies. Commissioner Short stated communication is vital and there is new energy and positive outlooks in Chestertown and Kent County. Ms. MacIntosh shared that Ms. Williams has already set a wonderful example by including her in meetings and activities that involve the Town of Chestertown. Ms. MacIntosh shared that Bernadette Bowman, Director, Tourism Development has been very inclusive, partnering to bring visitors to Chestertown and other areas of the County. Ms. Williams shared that the Chestertown Marina Revitalization is a great example of a collaborative project that needs to be included in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is being developed by the USRC.

Ms. Williams shared that the Department of Commerce has assigned Tammy Edwards to Kent County. Ms. Edwards is from Harford County and has been with the Department of Commerce for approximately 16 years. Ms. Edwards will be serving Kent, Cecil, and Harford Counties. Ms. Mason shared that she has worked with Ms. Edwards in Cecil County. Ms. Edwards is very skilled and has strong internal relationships within the Department of Commerce that will serve Kent County well.

Ms. Gray shared that the working group had met with Jason Depp, Webmaster, Information Technology about the Commercial Property Database. Ms. Gray and Ms. Genter said the meeting was very productive and Mr. Depp had already identified and developed a database to list properties and buildings and it seemed to be a good fit for what we had in mind. The other aspect would be static maps with priority funding areas, sustainable communities, and County zoning. The goal is to have a Commercial Property Database up and running by the end of January 2016. This is an example of how the County can collaborate with the Towns and share resources. Mr. Depp can work with Ms. MacIntosh to isolate the properties that she wants

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to showcase for the Arts & Entertainment District. Mr. Ampula shared that the price per square foot for lease/rent in Kent County are all over the board. Ms. Genter shared that some of these issues have to do with zoning and some zoning is so restrictive it is difficult to lease and/or rent. Ms. Williams also shared that Information Technology is working on a project plan for Economic Development to ensure we continue to make progress on our website offerings for business retention and attraction. Ms. Williams shared plans to provide information about housing and job opportunities on the Economic Development site, by providing links.

Ms. Williams shared that the Public Hearing, CHR5-2015 Economic and Tourism Development was held last night and it was uneventful, there were no questions or comments from the audience. The vote would take place on December 15, 2015, the next legislative day and the legislation would take effect on January 29, 2016.

Ms. Williams shared that she, Mr. Ampula, and Mr. Jacob will be meeting to discuss Economic Impact. Mr. Ampula shared that during his research he kept running into brick walls. Mr. Ampula asked who is authorized to send a letter to the State requesting information. Ms. Herman shared that the Board can request information on behalf of the Board. Ms. Genter complimented the statistics Mayor Cerino shared during the presentation to the Commissioners regarding the Chestertown Marina Revitalization Project.

Ms. Genter also shared that permitting fees are currently being discussed in the Town of Rock Hall. The Inn at Huntingfield generates as much revenue during Pirates and Wenches weekend, than January 1st through February 15th every year.

Ms. Williams shared that she is scheduled to visit with Keasha Haythe, Director, Dorchester County on December 16, 2015, to discuss intake sheets for new businesses and general Economic Development processes and philosophies.

Mr. Suresh shared that he visited with the Alumni Association and a lot of the information they capture through surveys is confidential. Ms. Fleegle shared that the surveys are currently being revamped to get all the information needed, while not creating survey fatigue. Mr. Suresh and Ms. Fleegle will continue to explore a means to obtain the information the Board is attempting to identify.

Mr. Luff shared that the Economic Development strategic plan is the next major project the Board needs to address. Mr. Ampula agreed that the plan needed to be updated. Ms. Williams shared that timing is perfect. The County will align their strategic plan with the State's plan, being developed by the Department of Commerce.

Commissioner Short commented on the revitalization of downtown Chestertown and the importance of the County supporting the projects downtown as they will bring tourists and visitors to other parts of the County. Ms. Williams shared that Mayor Cerino has requested a letter of support for the Chestertown Marina Revitalization project from the EDAB. Mr. Ampula and Commissioner Short commented on the possibility of the Board identifying the economic impact to the Town and the County. Mr. Jacob requested a presentation to share the project with

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the Board and other members concurred. Ms. Williams will request a presentation at the January meeting. Ms. Genter shared the Mayor Cerino stated he has a goal of receiving 100 letters of support to submit with their grant request.

A motion was made by Mr. Ampula, seconded by Mr. Jacob, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:33 p.m. The Board agreed to meet again on Wednesday, January 6, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Coordinator