

Economic Development Advisory Board

Kent County, Maryland

August 6, 2014

Board Members Present: James Rich, Chair, Ron Athey, Tom Beckett, Dan MacLeod, Robert Ampula, John Carroll, and Robert Jacob

Board Members Absent: Zoe Schneider

Also in attendance: Commissioner William Short, Ernest Crofoot, County Administrator, Tracy Davenport, Prospective Business Owner, Mindie Burgoyne, Regional Office of the Department of Business & Economic Development, Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council, and Jim Luff

At 4:05 p.m. the meeting convened.

On motion by Mr. Ampula and seconded by Mr. Carroll the minutes from the June 4, 2014 and notes from the July 2, 2014, meetings were approved.

Ms. Burgoyne's regional territory is the Upper Eastern Shore of Maryland; Queen Anne's, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties. Her role is to assist businesses and local governments in rural areas by connecting businesses with resources for growth, expansion, job retention, workforce training, etc. Mr. Burgoyne encouraged the County to grow the economy by looking at existing businesses, visiting often, asking questions, and identifying challenges.

Mr. Crofoot shared that we are into the second month of the Economic Development office transition and the County has not seen much activity. Two outside businesses have contacted the office in that time period.

Commissioner Short shared that interns are available to assist our businesses and suggested inviting someone from Washington College to talk about those opportunities.

Mr. Jacob and Mr. Carroll both observed that communication about the resources available to the County's existing businesses is fundamental to the success of economic development in Kent County.

Ms. Davenport showed a short video that supports her business plan, and showed examples; demonstrating the need for healthier options for our community when eating away from home. Ms. Davenport shared her journey to date, some frustrations, her progress, and what assistance she could use going forward. The reputation of Economic Development in Kent County has been one of "killer phrases" and needs to move towards a "How might we?" when addressing new businesses and growth of existing businesses. The need to change the attitude towards business friendliness was identified. Building relationships with other agencies, i.e. Health Department will also assist in this effort. These relationships already exist in other area within the County and we need to expand them to Economic Development. Everyone acknowledged that progress is being made and needs to continue in this direction. Ms. Davenport did share that the Town of Chestertown, has been most helpful in the process.

Mr. Ampula advised Ms. Davenport of funding resources available to businesses and shared that a strong business plan would be required. The Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center in Easton and Maryland Capital Enterprises, Inc. in Salisbury were suggested as possible funding opportunities.

Ms. Mason shared the Upper Shore Youth Assessment and Regional Planning Initiative being conducted by the Rural Maryland Council. A webinar was conducted on July 30, 2014, and lead by Craig Schroeder, Director of Youth Engagement. Ms. Mason discussed the youth's impact on critical issues in rural areas, discussed the survey process, and shared some of the survey questions. Mr. Crofoot shared that Dr. Leland Spencer had some recent Youth survey results that might be helpful to this initiative and the Board.

Mr. Ampula shared the 2014 Update Kent County Demographics.

Mr. Crofoot gave an update on the broadband initiative in the County, and shared that the County is currently exploring ways to tap into the State backbone, due to the capacity available. Verizon is currently working on placing an antenna on the Worton water tower which will improve service in that area.

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 p.m., and the board agreed to meet again on Wednesday, September 3, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams
Deputy Clerk