

Kent County Economic Development Advisory Board

Minutes of October 3, 2007

Chairman Stuart “Mickey” Elsberg called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Members present were: Mickey Elsberg, Jim Gillespie, Jeff Grafton, and Kent County Economic Development Director Jack Steinmetz, who acted as recording secretary.

Members absent were: Jay Yerkes, Tom Beckett, Carrie Anderson, and C. Breck Debnam

Guests present were: Mayor Jay Jacobs, City of Rock Hall
Mr. John Mason, DBED area representative

The minutes of the September 5, 2007 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Beckett had emailed in a correction in spelling, which was noted. With no further corrections, the minutes were accepted without vote.

Guest Speaker:

Rock Hall Mayor Jay Jacobs was the guest Mayor for this meeting. He brought the EDAB up to date on several items of interest from Rock Hall:

1. The Seafood Processing Plant on the water is still available. Mayor Jacobs had DBED representatives come into the community and visit the site. They have brought Mr. Scott Whimbrow, a commercial realtor, in to attempt to lease out the property on a minimum of \$6 per foot.
2. The 300th Anniversary Celebration is down to the final few months, after having had a very successful spring and summer season. According to the trolley company, about 30% of the riders are new to Kent County, and the B&B activity is up 100% over last year, with local merchants noting definite increases in individual spending.
3. The Mayor will be forming a Task Force of volunteers to review and work with Mark Rice on the potential for a commuter ferry between Rock Hall and Baltimore.
4. One new housing project is being reviewed which will have about 60 homes and is the first new project in over 25 years.
5. The Mayor is looking for a possible state grant to purchase the Old Oar building and use it for a visitors center/restroom facility for tourists.

Chairman’s Report:

Chairman Elsberg reported on the possibility of Enterprise grant monies to further the workforce housing project. He reported that Ms. Gail Owings, Kent County Planning Director, will be putting in matching housing grant monies in her 2008 budget. Director Steinmetz noted that he had attended the latest town/county hearings on the “gateway” project, and that he was concerned that there seemed to be a reluctance to provide meaningful rental potential in the development. Chairman Elsberg will follow up. Mayor Jacobs noted that the increased cost of land in Rock Hall has effected the availability of affordable housing for the restaurant and marina semi-skilled workers.

Individual Board Member Reports:

Mr. Gillespie, Commercial Building

Mr. Gillespie reported that there were no major commercial projects begun since the last meeting. He did note that there was a possibility of some of the Life Sciences operation leasing a different facility in the KRM business park on Kent Island, because he understood that he had to provide 15 new jobs if he bought the land. Director Steinmetz stated that he is unaware of any such misunderstanding, as the entire park requires only 17 jobs among the 4 lots, or only 4 to 5 jobs per lot. Life Sciences has been on the waiting list for up to two lots since September 2006, so Director Steinmetz will follow up with Mr. Leverage.

Mr. Grafton, Education

Mr. Grafton reported that Junior Achievement is up to 10 new volunteers and the JA program is running well. Chairman Elsberg noted that he had spoken at the Chestertown Rotary Club to outline the JA program. Mr. Grafton also outlined the new Kent County Public School S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Program. The S.T.E.M. concept arose nationally from a realization that other countries are doing a much better job in preparing their young people in the areas of math and engineering and science, and therefore a concerted effort was needed to improve our own teaching model. A new S.T.E.M. Committee (of which Director Steinmetz is a member) has been formed to begin to design the new program, including participation requirements, curriculum, marketing, etc.

Director's Report:

Director Steinmetz reported on his efforts to have Washington College and the City of Chestertown merchants cooperate more fully on mutually beneficial programs. In addition, he reported that he had met with Washington College President Baird Tipson and informed President Tipson that the Board of Commissioners has approved the "addition" of a student body representative to the EDAB. Director Steinmetz will be working directly with Dr. Michael Harvey, Business Department Chairman, to choose the student.

Director Steinmetz reported that the Route 301 groundwater study grant agreements have been signed and hopefully DBED will approval the start of the study.

Director Steinmetz commented briefly on the vineyard/winery activities.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Gillespie moved for adjournment, and Mr. Grafton seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:12 p.m.