

Kent County Economic Development Advisory Board
Minutes of March 5, 2008

Vice Chairman Grafton called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Members present were: Carrie Anderson, Jay Yerkes, Jeff Grafton, Tom Beckett, and Kent County Economic Development Director Jack Steinmetz, who acted as recording secretary.

Members absent were: Jim Gillespie, C. Breck Debnam, and Mickey Elsberg

Guests in Attendance:

There were no guest speakers nor were there any members of the public in attendance.

The minutes of the February 6, 2008 meeting were reviewed. The following corrections were requested:

By Mr. Beckett: Change wording in first sentence of his SCORE report from, “.....joint presentations on Marketing Skills.” to “.....marketing workshop.”

By Mr. Elsberg (submitted via email): In the final sentence of Mr. Debnam’s Ag report, add, “Following an inquiry from Mr. Elsberg, he....” In the final sentence of Mr. Elsberg’s Workforce Housing report, add “....Route 213.....” to the description and delete “housing efforts” and replace that phrase with “proposed annexations.” Lastly, add “....., with special reference to the potential of gaining some benefit from the spreading of services to the BRAC move to the Eastern Shore.” to the end of the final sentence of Mr. Beckett’s SCORE report,

It was moved by Mr. Beckett, seconded by Ms. Anderson, to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman’s Report:

Their was no formal “Chairman’s Report”

Individual Board Member Reports:

Mr. Grafton, Education

Mr. Grafton reported on the latest Board of Education actions, including the approval of a \$27 million budget, subject to final approval by the BOC. In a major action, the Board of Education agreed to work with the BOC to declare the Administration Building as “surplus” real estate and move the current occupants and operations into the Chestertown middle school facility. The building would then be sold with the BOC utilizing the proceeds for BOE purposes. Mr. Grafton reported that the Adult Education grant would not be renewed, and it was expected that this function would be picked up by another local agency. Lastly, he discussed the continuing enrollment decline, which began in the 1998-1999 school year.

Mr. Beckett, SCORE

Mr. Beckett described the upcoming Kent County/Queen Anne's County, March 19th, Marketing Workshop, and that notices were being sent to 76 old clients and 500 Chamber of Commerce members. He noted that there would be a Financial Seminar in May, with further details to follow. Lastly, he acknowledged the \$500 funding level for the Marketing Workshop, which was provided by the Economic Development Office.

Ms. Anderson, Retail

Ms. Anderson reported that the Economic Development Office was sponsoring the registration fee for her and two other individuals to attend the National MainStreet Conference in Philadelphia. The other two individuals are Bill Ruckelshaus, President of Chestertown Downtown Association and Jack Hefner, President of Smilin' Jake's in Rock Hall. Although Chestertown and Rock Hall may not be able to individually afford to initiate a full MainStreet program, it was felt that the conference would supply valuable resource material to the three retail professionals, and thereby justified the EDO participation.

Mr. Yerkes, Residential Building & Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Yerkes reported that renovation activity was strong, however the backlogs, which were prevalent in the past, were now almost non-existent and pricing is becoming more competitive. He noted that new construction is down, even though building permits have remained high for planning purposes. He reported that the C of C has formed a "Green Committee" and that Mayor Margo Bailey has joined the effort. The committee will attempt to recognize those businesses that use "green" methods, and they see newer business which are started by younger owners as being more proactive in this area.

Director's Report:

Director Steinmetz reported on an update he had given to the BOC regarding the BRAC initiatives. He stressed that the vast majority of the effect of BRAC 2005 would be in the Ft. Meade to Aberdeen Proving Grounds on the western shore. We will work with Queen Anne's County and Talbot County to try and garner some value, but our immediate impact is expected to be minimal. Of note, Cecil County is partnering with Harford County in the Aberdeen area.

Director Steinmetz updated the Board on the Kent County Public School S.T.E.M. initiative, and his work with the school system's STEM Committee.

Director Steinmetz updated the Vineyard Management Company efforts and noted that we were only awaiting the final MARBIDCO Board of Directors approval of our joint matching grant.

Director Steinmetz reported on the upcoming DBED tour to show the business development staff what we have to offer.

Director Steinmetz reminded everyone that the next meeting would be Wednesday, April 2, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, Mr. Beckett moved for adjournment, and Mr. Yerkes seconded. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.