



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

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July 10, 2024

Commission Members Present: Charlie Athey, Paula Reeder, Sandy Scott, Judy Crow, David Bowman, and Judy Gifford.

Commission Member Absent: Richard Story.

Also in Attendance: Katie Abbott, Economic Development Manager, Shalyn Boulden, Tourism Manager, and Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development.

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Athey called the meeting to order. Mr. Athey requested a motion to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2024, meeting. On a motion by Ms. Reeder, seconded by Mr. Bowman, the June 12, 2024, minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Athey shared it was discussed and decided to leave times on the agenda for staff and visitors' planning. The discussion regarding adding additional members to the Commission will be tabled at this time. Mr. Story spoke with each of the County Commissioners, and they did not have a strong opinion on the matter. Ms. Abbott shared that Ms. Williams would like all of us to continue to advocate for interest forms to be submitted. Ms. Abbott provided the link to the interest form for ETDC members to share with interested parties and the link will also be shared in the Economic Development Newsletter. Mr. Athey shared that there was some discussion regarding changing the meeting time, that matter was also tabled. Staff requested advance notice of topics or questions from the ETDC that they would like to discuss. Mr. Athey advised the [Eastern Shore Business Sentiment Survey](#) is available for businesses to complete. Ms. Abbott will be sharing the press release on the Economic Development Social Media pages.

John Schratwieser, Director, Kent Cultural Alliance (KCA) and Hester Sachse, Deputy Director, Kent Cultural Alliance & Chestertown Arts & Entertainment Manager gave an update on current projects. Mr. Schratwieser shared they are coming up on the 50th anniversary of arts and culture in Kent County, starting out in 1974 by Vince Raimond under the former name of Kent County Arts Council. He shared that KCA provides grants for general support, independent artists, community projects, and arts in Kent County Public Schools. Mr. Schratwieser shared the list of projects and programs that KCA has assisted with across Kent County and advised of the new SFW Residency program which is the first of its kind in Maryland to host visiting artists. Every \$1 that the State spends on the arts, \$4 is returned in taxes.

Ms. Sachse advised that the Chestertown Arts and Entertainment District (A&E) will be working on submitting their recertification and will be working with Ms. Williams to determine what tax credits that will be available for qualifying artists within the A & E District. She advised that they will be launching a survey to aid with the preparation of a new ten-year plan and are working closely with Main Street Chestertown on street banners for welcoming Washington College students to Chestertown, and for

the holidays. The ETDC can best support KCA through promotion of events through ad buys, and the need for affordable studio space. He also advised that a venue for the music festival is needed.

Ms. Abbott reviewed the proposed business retention and expansion survey questions and advised that the staff have discussed having a fillable form available through Hubspot to collect the data from the business owners. Mr. Athey advised that the ETDC will have a list of businesses to consider sending the survey to start and then expand to other businesses. Mr. Bowman suggested that the survey might be better received if it were scaled back to six to eight questions. Ms. Abbott advised that the business profile portion be sent prior to interviewing the businesses.

Ms. Abbott demonstrated where the incentives can be located on the Kent County website. She advised that the Commerce Zone Tax Credit and the Enterprise Zone credits are administered by the County. Other incentives are State and Federal programs. We currently have eight businesses that are utilizing the Commerce Zone Tax Credit, ten businesses in the Enterprise Zone are utilizing the property tax credit and nine businesses are utilizing the income tax credit.

Ms. Boulden advised the Kent County FY2025 budget has been adopted and that the ETD operating budget is \$198,000 with \$90,000 allocated for Tourism advertising, \$50,000 for Economic Development marketing and sponsorships, and \$22,000 for other advertising and marketing expenses, such as printing and content creation. The Tourism DMO Grant from the Maryland Office of Tourism is \$27,698 for FY2025. Ms. Boulden will be sharing the advertising placements with the Lodging Association, Downtown Chestertown Association, Main Street Chestertown, Main Street Rock Hall, and the Greater Rock Hall Business Association.

Ms. Reeder inquired about any amount in the budget that could be used for economic development projects. Ms. Osborn advised that there is not a line item in the budget allocated specifically for economic development projects.

Ms. Boulden advised ETD participates with the American Bus Association (ABA) and the annual ABA conference resulted in three bus tours to Kent County. In 2022, Kent County had 328,100 visitors which was a 4% increase and those visitors spent approximately \$72 Million which was an increase of 4.8%.

Ms. Boulden shared that the Department of Housing and Community Development awarded more than \$16.2 Million to assist small businesses. Those in Kent County receiving awards were Play It Again Sam, Main Street Chestertown, and Main Street Rock Hall.

The Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference is scheduled for August 14 – 17, 2024. This year's theme is Winter Wonderland. The Kent County booth will focus on winter tourism to include hunting, fishing, oystering, birding, etc.

Postcards with all the Economic and Tourism Development social media channels were distributed to the ETDC members.

The August agenda will finalize the business retention and expansion survey and include one or two guest speakers to be identified once they have been confirmed.

Ms. Crow inquired about short-term rental information, questioning how many are located within the County. Ms. Osborn advised that we should have a number by August 10th, the projected “go-live” date for the GovOS software.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Gifford, seconded by Ms. Reeder and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:22 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, August 7, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners’ Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director