

Talbot County Economic Development Commission Meeting

Minutes from Thursday, August 3, 2017

Members Present: Chairman, Timothy G. Jones; Walter Chase, Ron Engle, Ted Bautz, Scott Beatty, Al Silverstein, Dr. Clay Railey, Mike Henry, Peter Dunbar, Jean Weisman, Cassandra Vanhooser, Margaret Enloe

Members Excused: Craig Wanner, Jaqueline Wilson, Andrea Lev, Gerald Knight O'mara, Jennifer Williams, Shannon Potter Dill, Terenda Thomas

Staff Members Present: Sam Shoge and Ryan Snow

Attendees: Scott Warner, Debbie Bowden, Dustin Yoxall, Donovan Sherry, Jennifer Shull, Laura Heikes, Andy Hollis, Jessica Morris

Call to Order: Mr. Tim Jones called the meeting to order with a quorum at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the June meeting were presented. Mr. Scott Beatty moved that the Minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Walter Chase seconded the motion which passed by a unanimous vote.

Strategic Communications Plan Update: Ms. Cassandra Vanhooser reported that the department is making progress on drafting an economic development strategic communications plan. The plan is comprised of a new website, a new Facebook page, and a newsletter. Ms. Vanhooser indicated that if everything goes as planned, the strategic communications plan will be launched within the first two weeks of October. She further stated that new print collateral will be added after the department's digital presence has been established.

Ms. Vanhooser stated that she and her team have been meeting weekly to work on the strategic plan from the listening sessions and hope to present the draft to the EDC at their meeting in November. The team has taken time to lay out all of the events that they have throughout the upcoming year.

Economic Development Coordinator, Mr. Sam Shoge, shared briefly that the department staff attended the Maryland Economic Development Conference that was held in Baltimore. He indicated that the conference was good to lay a foundation for economic development, but also to see what other offices are doing and to hear about some of their budgets.

In updating communications and marketing for Talbot County, Mr. Shoge indicated that the plan is to communicate the Talbot County story in a way that's engaging. Mr. Shoge pointed out the need to capture the products that Talbot County businesses are making, and what the businesses are doing for their employees and the community in the communications and marketing plan.

Mr. Shoge stated this is the essence of the marketing and communications plan and why it is such a main focus for the team.

New Economic Development Brand: A joint Marketing Committee was formed with some members from both the EDC and the Tourism Board to discuss what the brand of Economic Development looks like. Mr. Shoge pointed out that having a strong identifiable brand is important to telling the Talbot County story and getting that marketing plan in place. A sample of the brand that the Marketing Committee found agreeable was presented to the Commission at today's meeting. With visual aids, Mr. Shoge explained several aspects of the marketing strategies on which the team is focused. He indicated that the logo previously presented to the Commission had to be withdrawn upon discovering that another economic development office was using a slightly modified version of that exact logo. The marketing committee went back and focused on what would represent the department of Economic Development and Tourism and came up with today's presentation. This is a familiar brand, currently representing Talbot Tourism.

Ms. Vanhooser pointed out she was not a proponent of the new logo; it was solely the Marketing Committee's idea. Ms. Vanhooser wanted to reinforce she did not have undue influence in incorporating the logo she helped craft for tourism on economic development. The DEDT presented the logo to the County Manager and stated feedback from Mr. Hollis was positive. When asked by an EDC member if any marketing research on the logo was done, Ms. Vanhooser added that no marketing research on the logo has been done to this point. Ms. Vanhooser deferred to Mr. Dustin Yoxall, the web developers for the tourism and economic development site, and Mr. Yoxall stated that they received positive feedback when presenting the logo to focus groups.

Web Development Presentation: Dustin Yoxall and Donovan Sherry from Cake & Eat it Designs presented a mock-up of the new economic development website.

Mr. Shoge stated that the new website will be nimble and responsive as well as visual and engaging. The site will be able to provide all the data and statistics site selectors seek as well as be a resource for entrepreneurs. The website will be a great recruiting tool for the new businesses the County is trying to attract.

Mr. Sherry and Mr. Yoxall pointed out that the new website draws parallels to the Tourism website while still having its own unique brand. The goal for the homepage is to have clean, clear, bold messaging and to have some great visual elements and great photography as the forefront of the homepage.

Mr. Shoge pointed out that the purple and red color schemes of the new Economic Development website (talbotowrks.org) directly relate to the County Government website and the logo is the

same as Tourism. Also, access to the Economic Development website is available from the County website and the Tourism site. The plan is also to launch a newsletter or small blog to be able to create social media posts. So information will be available on the website, the blog – which get sent out in the form of a newsletter to the targeted audience, as well as the social media page which will link directly back to the website and contact information.

County Manager Report: No Report

Chairman's Report: No Report

Vice Chairman's Report: Mr. Silverstein reported he had the opportunity to attend a work session with the County Council on July 10th along with Ms. Vanhooser, Mr. Shoge and Mr. Neely from PACE to discuss the Maryland PACE program work. In 2014, Maryland passed enabling legislation for Commercial PACE Program – to collect payment for commercial energy efficiency upgrades from a commercial property's property tax assessment. The Maryland PACE program allows counties in Maryland to join the state wide standard seed PACE program at no cost. Local financial institutions are able to participate, so a local component is possible. Mr. Silverstein reported that Mr. Fleming, owner of the Robert Morris Inn and member of the Tourism Board, added that if the county adopted the PACE program he would be very interested in using it for energy upgrades to his property, rather than taking cash out of his operating account. This would give him a 20 year payback, which would enable him to get into the program, make remodeling changes and realize the savings on those changes on a former facility that is older and hasn't had a lot of upgrading.

The Talbot County Finance Department testified they have the personnel and the software to implement the collection and the remittance of taxes for the PACE program. The County Council spoke with County Attorney, Tony Kupersmith, to have him draft enabling legislation and he is working through that. Mr. Kupersmith said sample legislation is available. Mr. Hollis stated he will make sure to check in periodically to move the process forward.

Department of Commerce Update: Ms. Bowden, Talbot County's Department of Commerce Representative, reported on a new incentive the Maryland Department of Commerce launched. Called "More Jobs for Marylanders," any business that adds ten jobs within a two-year time frame can realize a three thousand dollar to five thousand dollar per job income tax credit. There are certain caveats on that which includes: the positions have to be full time and certain industries cannot participate such as retail and service industries. Also, the job has to pay 120% over state minimum wage which right now is \$11.10. By next July it will be \$12.10. The process is handled much the same as any kind of certification for a business. They are able to take a tax credit and a letter of intent goes to the Commerce Finance Department. From there an application is submitted by the business and then that business is certified to receive that tax

credit on their income tax filing. Revitalization areas are where the \$5,000.00 threshold comes into play and that is an enterprise zone and sustainable community.

Adjournment: With business concluded the meeting was adjourned.