



TALBOT COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
215 Bay Street, Suite #5 | EASTON, MARYLAND 21601 | (P) 410-770-8058 (F) 410-770-8059

Talbot County Economic Development Commission Meeting
Minutes from March 7, 2019

Members Present: Chairman Jackie Wilson, Ron Engle, Cassandra Vanhooser, Reza Jafari, Micah Risher, Ted Bautz, Jean Weisman, Scott Beatty, Andrea Lev, Margaret Enloe, Shannon Dill, Tim Jones, Andy Hollis

Members Absent: Al Silverstein, Peter Dunbar, Walter Chase, Terenda Thomas

Department of Economic Development Staff Present: Sam Shoge, Kathy Megahan

Attendees: Dana Newman, Scott Warner, Nancy LaJoice, Melissa Kelly, Kimberly Kratovil, John Pepe, Gordon Fronk, Ryan Snow, Donna Saathoff, Jim Normandin

Call to Order: Jackie Wilson called the meeting to order with a quorum at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the February 7, 2019 meeting were presented. Mr. Bautz moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Jafari seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

Director's Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser informed the members of a Broadband Market Survey that has gone out to residents of the County in unserved areas. The point of the survey is to get feedback from residents on their interest in having broadband. Ms. Vanhooser said the County is hoping to expand broadband to all parts of the County. She said survey results should be back by the end of March. Ms. Vanhooser also reported that the Department has been fielding a number of inquiries from start-ups, many of them tourism related.

Chairman's Report: Jackie Wilson

No Report

Business Appreciation Breakfast Announcement: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge reminded members the Business Appreciation Breakfast will be Friday, May 3 at the Milestone. The department is requesting nominations for The Community Impact Award. Those nominations are due by March 15. Mr. Shoge will email the link to the nomination form. Mr.



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Shoge announced the keynote Speaker for the breakfast will be newly appointed Secretary of Commerce, Kelly Schulz.

Allen Harim Food Plant – Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge announced the Allen Harim Food Plant in Cordova is under new management. American Aquaculture Holdings, LLC has acquired the poultry processing plant and will be building a state of the art aquafarm. Mr. Shoge added the new owners will be coming before the EDC to give an in-depth presentation in the near future.

County Council Report: Chuck Callahan, Vice President Talbot County Council

Mr. Callahan informed members department budget presentations to the County Council are underway. He reported the broadband survey went out to about 3,000 residents to help the Council study where broadband should be expanded in the County. Mr. Callahan noted the Mistletoe Hall project should be ready to break ground in June. He said he and the other Council members met with Easton Mayor Willey monthly for breakfast to discuss issues important to the Town of Easton and the County. The Council will be meeting this month with the Mayor for a presentation on Easton Point. Mr. Callahan stated that on February 16 the Council met with the Planning staff for an update on the working waterfront plan for Tilghman Island. The objective is to develop zoning that will encourage maritime commercial development in the local community.

Department of Commerce Report: Nancy LaJoice

Ms. LaJoice reported on a trend of large metal fabrication businesses that are looking to sub-contract work locally. Contact Ms. LaJoice if you know of anyone who would be interested. She announced on March 21 there will be a manufacturing and technology networking night at Chesapeake College. Attendance is free of charge.

Member Updates and Review of 2018:

Ron Engle – Town of Easton

Mr. Engle reported the Easton Town Council is close to approving the final zoning for Easton Point. He noted the Talbot Shopping Center was sold to a Tennessee company. The sale does not include the Lowes store or Kohls Department Store. In addition, the Avalon Theater continues with its rehabilitation. Mr. Engle informed the commission the Arundel Medical Center at Waterside Village will have a ribbon cutting on May 15. The contracts for the planning of Mistletoe Hall continue to progress.



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Reza Jafari – Workforce Development

Mr. Jafari introduced Jim Normandin, who is the new Regional President of APG Media. He will be managing the Star Democrat. Mr. Jafari reported that at the most recent meeting of the Workforce Development Task Force, representatives met from both the demand and supply side of labor. He noted the serious impact artificial intelligence and virtual reality would be having on the future workforce

Jean Weisman – Town of St. Michaels

Ms. Weisman reported the town of St. Michaels has twenty-one million dollars' worth of building permits submitted by The Inn at Perry Cabin to proceed with their new additions. She said they hope to be able to break ground this month. The former Acme building redevelopment is progressing slowly. Ms. Weisman noted at this time of year it is common to see changes in the storefronts downtown. She added the town's biggest challenges in 2018 were constant rain and having Harbour Towne Resort closed, affecting tourism revenue. Two areas that continue to be problems for local businesses are workforce shortage and affordable housing. Ms. Weisman stated the first annual St. Michaels Chocolate Fest was very successful.

Scott Beatty – Commercial Banking

Mr. Beatty reported on a large challenge for bankers in 2018 was yields on loans, which have not gone up in the past year in proportion to deposit rates. Mr. Beatty noted that 60 legislators changed in the State Legislature over the course of the last election. He feels we will be seeing enormous changes in Maryland State Government.

Andrea Lev – Bailey Chase Retirement Community

Ms. Lev reported Easton Hospital is working hard at developing networks with skilled nursing facilities and outside providers to create better community partnerships. She said there is a new payment system coming in October for all skilled nursing centers to reflect a medical model. Ms. Lev stated they are meeting with the County Operation Center, EMS and local police to create a better response network for the most vulnerable population in the County. She informed the Commission as of April 1, 2019 Bailey Chase will become part of the ACTS Community. Ms. Lev said this is a fantastic opportunity for Bailey Chase, which should result in increased development and expanding services.

John Pepe and Gordon Frock – Town of Oxford

Ms. Vanhooser introduced John Pepe and Gordon Frock who are commissioners representing the town of Oxford. Mr. Pepe reported on the opening of the Oxford Social Club this past year. He stated the MEWS project has gotten an additional \$175,000 grant toward stabilization and renovation of the building. The challenge, he feels, is finding a commercial use for the first floor with residential use on the second floor. Mr. Pepe noted the town has developed a storm water



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management program to address flooding issues that have gone on for years. He added the town is on the last stages of upgrades to the wastewater treatment facility, which should be completed this year.

Cassandra Vanhooser – Tourism

Ms. Vanhooser reported tourism in Talbot County brings in strong revenue and supports many jobs in the county. She noted that recently there is increased competition from surrounding counties and Talbot County will need to continually re-image our product to compete. She thanked Senator Cardin for introducing the legislation at the national level for Americas Scenic Byways.

Adjournment: With business, concluded Mr. Bautz moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Jafari. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Next meeting will be Thursday, April 4, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)