



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 April 4, 2019

Members Present: Chairman Jackie Wilson, Ron Engle, Cassandra Vanhooser, Vice Chairman Reza Jafari, Ted Bautz, Jean Weisman, Scott Beatty, Andrea Lev, Margaret Enloe, Shannon Dill, Tim Jones, Andy Hollis, Al Silverstein, Peter Dunbar, Terenda Thomas, Donna Saathoff, Chuck Callahan

Members Absent: Walter Chase, Micah Risher, Craig Wanner

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

Attendees: Dana Newman, Scott Warner, Nancy LaJoice, Susie Hayward, Mike Thielke, Tracy Ward

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

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

Guest Speaker Series: Mike Thiekle, F3 Tech and Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center

Mr. Thiekle began his presentation with a brief description of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center, a non-profit created to advance entrepreneurship and startups throughout Maryland's Eastern Shore. ESEC was founded in 2004 and the original purpose was to create jobs after the closing of the Black and Decker plant.

Mr. Thiekle noted in recent years they have focused on startups involved in innovation and technology products and services. Some of their services include hotDesk, a network of co-working spaces; F3 Tech, an initiative focused on innovation in agriculture and aquaculture; and revolving loan funds available to small businesses on the Eastern Shore. Mr. Thiekle said hotDesk, started in 2013, is intended to help smaller entrepreneurs have a place to network, connect, and have access to the internet. He added, there are six hotDesk locations throughout the Eastern Shore. He said there are about 150 members who pay a monthly subscription.

Mr. Thiekle described F3 Tech, which started in 2015 to solve the problem of a lack of investment dollars, in the agri-tech, aqua-tech, and enviro-tech industries. ESEC realized they



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needed an industry sector focus, which on the Eastern Shore is agriculture and seafood. The continued growing demand for food could not be met by more input but by innovation and technology. So F3 Tech was developed to advance agriculture and aquaculture technologies. For example, F3 Tech is helping farmers utilize the data they are collecting from software they have invested in to make better, smarter decisions. Automation is another area that is expanding. Mr. Thielke stated there is huge investment now going on in agritech and aquatech due to the constant growing demand for food, but Maryland has been slow to invest. Maryland already has the infrastructure to become a predominate leader in this industry. He noted in their first pilot year of 2018, F3 Tech had five companies participate in their accelerator cohort; Algen Air, Biotrophics, Cykloburn, Hiveland, and VakSea. Lastly, he described F3 Tech's accelerator program, whose goal is to generate a more innovative culture within agriculture and aquaculture. Only five companies are accepted into the five month accelerator program with the goal of getting the five startups ready for investors and the marketplace.

Department Report: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge introduced the new Site Selection feature on the Talbot County Economic Development web site (www.talbotworks.org). He noted this tool would allow commercial realtors to upload their listings in Talbot County. The new feature is very user friendly and easy to self-manage. Mr. Shoge added the site makes it easy for people to browse current listings of commercial buildings or lots for sale that are then linked to the realtor's own site. He said the feature will go live once the data from local commercial realtors is uploaded, hopefully within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Shoge reported on two new Data Dashboards created by Eastern Shore GIS Cooperative. One dashboard focuses on Healthcare throughout the state and the second concerns Education throughout the state. He added these dashboards are interactive and engaging for people to dissect data about those two industries by county. Mr. Shoge will send out the link to these new dashboards.

Director's Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser reminded members the Business Appreciation Breakfast is coming on May 3 and nominations are due by April 5 for Community Impact Awards. Tickets for the breakfast are available through the web site (www.talbotworks.org) under Recent Updates. She added the keynote speaker for this years breakfast is Department of Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz.



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Ms. Vanhooser mentioned the concern of many local businesses over the impact of a \$15 an hour minimum wage, which was recently passed by the Maryland General Assembly. How will it affect local employers bottom line and how this could drive businesses out of Talbot County and out of the state of Maryland.

Chairman's Report: Jackie Wilson

Ms. Wilson asked that a motion be made to cancel the May 2 meeting due to the Business Appreciation Breakfast the next day. A motion was made by Al Silverstein and seconded by Ted Bautz. The vote was unanimous. Ms. Wilson reported she and Mr. Jafari will be meeting with Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Shoge on the Friday before each EDC meeting to review updates and concerns.

County Council Report: Chuck Callahan

Mr. Callahan complimented the Economic Development and Tourism Dept. on their recent budget presentation before the County Council. He noted the Council members will be having dinner up at Chesapeake College, reiterating the Council's support of the college. Mr. Callahan reported the County is getting ready to start construction on Goldsborough Neck Road, which is step one toward development of Mistletoe Hall Commerce Business Park. He said the Council has approved a letter supporting the town of Easton for the proposed establishment of an Arts and Entertainment District. Ms. Vanhooser added this designation comes with tax incentives. Lastly, Mr. Callahan said the Council approved a local four year integrated plan with neighboring counties to work with Dan McDermott and the Upper Shore Work Force Investment Program.

Department of Commerce Report: Nancy LaJoice

Ms. LaJoice reported on the success of the Manufacturing and Technology Networking Night at Chesapeake College. Businesses from five counties were represented. The plan is to hold another Networking Night in the fall.



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Member Updates and Review of 2018:

Ron Engle – Town of Easton

Mr. Engle reported that several of the projects around Easton are coming to fruition including Easton Point and Mistletoe Hall Commerce Business Park.

Reza Jafari – Workforce Development

Mr. Jafari reminded members April is Community College month.

Margaret Enloe – Waterfowl Festival

Ms. Enloe reported they are gearing up for the 50 Anniversary of the Waterfowl Festival next year. She added a bid has gone out for renovation of the windows in the Waterfowl building and the deadline is April 17 to place a bid. Information is on the Waterfowl website.

Al Silverstein – Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Silverstein reported they are working with nineteen teachers from local schools touring eight businesses in Talbot County to make them aware of future job possibilities for their students. Secondly, he added Jim Normandin of the Star Democrat has joined the Economic Development Work Force Task Force.

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, June 6, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)