



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 June 6, 2019

Members Present: Chairman, Jackie Wilson, Vice Chairman, Reza Jafari Ron Engle, Cassandra Vanhooser, Ted Bautz, Jean Weisman, Scott Beatty, Andy Hollis, Peter Dunbar, Donna Saathoff, Walter Chase, Micah Risher, Craig Wanner

Members Absent: Chuck Callahan, Andrea Lev, Margaret Enloe, Shannon Dill, Tim Jones, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas

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

Attendees: Dana Newman, Scott Warner, Nancy LaJoice, Susie Hayward, Bill Reddish, (Congressman Andy Harris office), Cristy Morrell

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

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the April 4, 2019 meeting were presented. Mr. Jafari moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Chase seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

Update on American Aquaculture Holdings: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge gave the members an update on the progress of American Aquaculture Holdings, which has purchased the Allen Harim Food Plant in Cordova. Chris Hlubb, the principal with American Aquaculture, is working to move the project forward. The company plans to revitalize and transform the former poultry plant to a state-of-the-art salmon aquafarm. Mr. Shoge pointed out the American Aquaculture plans to invest up to \$200 million in the facility and over time add up to 150 new jobs to Talbot County. American Aquaculture spent approximately \$750,000 in the acquisition of the plant. Mr. Shoge stated Mr. Hlubb is feeling very positive about the process he has experienced so far with the different entities in Talbot County and the State of Maryland. The Talbot County Department of Economic Development is putting together a financing package for American Aquaculture. The next step is for the company to hire an engineering firm to do the site work.

Mr. Hollis asked Mr. Shoge if he could touch on the overall master plan for the area. Mr. Shoge stated the Talbot County Planning Department has issued a RFP to conduct a master plan for the village of Cordova. American Aquaculture hopes to play a large role in revitalizing the



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community. Ms. Vanhooser added that the community's vital location along Route 404 adds to the potential for adding new life to the area. Ms. Wilson asked if there has been any feedback from the local residents. Ms. Vanhooser said community meetings are part of the master plan. Ms. Saathoff, a longtime resident, stated the closed plant has left a big void in the community. Mr. Engle voiced some concerns such as the need for housing for the 150 new employees and training for Talbot County residents to prepare them for this new opportunity.

Mr. Shoge introduced Mr. Bill Reddish from Congressman Andy Harris's office.

Department Report: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge distributed a handout showing the profit and loss for the Business Appreciation Breakfast. He noted the feedback from the event was extremely positive. The videos of the winning businesses were very well received and the keynote speaker, Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz remarks were on point. Revenues from online ticket sales and the purchase of tables greatly increased this year. The overall bottom line is a net loss. Mr. Shoge addressed the need and desire for sponsorships for the event. Mr. Shoge added the next Business Appreciation Breakfast is scheduled for April 24, 2020.

Director's Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser reported on her trip to California to The International Travel Sales Mission. She met with tour operators, travel writers, and other travel businesses to sell them on the idea of bringing groups of tourists to Talbot County. She noted the importance of having the latest Talbot County Guide ready to distribute at this event. Mrs. Vanhooser said 25,000 2019 Talbot County Guides have just been mailed out with Chesapeake Bay Magazine. She told the members these materials are available to them as well as a packet of resources for people who may be relocating to the area.

Chairman's Report: Jackie Wilson

Ms. Wilson reminded the members that she, Mr. Shoge, Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Jafari meet the Friday before the next EDC meeting to get updated on the topics for the upcoming meeting. She noted one suggestion was for the members to come up with the monthly guest speaker ideas. She also questioned if there was an ethical problem in obtaining sponsors for the Business Appreciation Breakfast. Ms. Wilson asked the members for input on how to handle this issue and eliminate the deficit experienced this year.



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Mr. Bautz made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Jafari, to explore underwriting the Business Appreciation Breakfast and seek out additional funds. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Wilson added the next EDC meeting will be Thursday, July 11, 2019 due to the fourth of July holiday, and there will be no meeting in August.

County Council Report: Chuck Callahan

No Report

Department of Commerce Report: Nancy LaJoice

Ms. LaJoice reported she will be scheduling dates for Citations of Celebration for several businesses in Talbot County. She added she attended a presentation by MAIF (Maryland Auto Insurance Fund), they are the insurers of last resort. She discovered there are approximately 10,000 people a month that lose their auto insurance, and there is a daily fine for not being insured, which makes it impossible for many of these people to pay the fine and insurance. A new grant will be launched in July of 2019 that will cover 80% of the fine.

Member Update

Micah Richer – Easton Airport

Mr. Richer reported the Airport has been awarded \$5.5 million from DOT toward the acquisition of the old Black and Decker building, hopefully to be completed by October 1, 2019.

Susie Hayward –

Ms. Hayward reported the National Association of Realtors has been working hard regarding changes to the Federal Flood program. The program is being revamped with a better mapping system, which will be advantageous to current and potential homeowners in Talbot County.

Walter Chase – Town of Trappe

Mr. Chase noted the Lakeview development project continues to move forward. Several restaurants in Trappe that had closed, have been sold to new owners, and will be re-opening soon.



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Jean Weisman – Town of St. Michaels

The work on the old Acme building is moving quickly with two businesses ready to move in.

Donna Saathoff – Agriculture

The Talbot County Fair is being held July 11, 12, and 13. Farm stands across the county should be opening a little ahead of usual due to an early harvest.

Dana Newman – Talbot County Free Library

Ms. Newman stated the Chesapeake Book Festival is June 8, and they are expecting a large crowd. They will be having 25 children's authors.

Ron Engle – Town of Easton

Mr. Engle shared his concern that the county will be experiencing a public safety crisis in the near future due to a shortage of law enforcement officers. Starting salaries are higher in adjoining counties. He feels a public funded fire department is in the near future for Talbot County.

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, July 11, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)