



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 July 11, 2019

Members Present: Chairman, Jackie Wilson, Vice Chairman, Reza Jafari Ron Engle, Cassandra Vanhooser, Ted Bautz, Peter Dunbar, Donna Saathoff, Craig Wanner, Tim Jones

Members Absent: Chuck Callahan, Andrea Lev, Margaret Enloe, Shannon Dill, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas, Jean Weisman, Scott Beatty, Andy Hollis, Walter Chase, Micah Risher

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

Attendees: Dana Newman, Keith Graffius, Cristy Morrell, Laura Heikes, Deena Kilmon, Melissa Kelly, Kimberly Kratovil

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

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the June 6, 2019 meeting were presented. Mr. Jafari moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Engle seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

Guest Speaker Series: Cristy Morrell, Critchlow Adkins Children's Centers

Ms. Morrell is the executive director of Critchlow Adkins Children's Centers. She started her presentation by introducing the program Imagination Library of Talbot County, an initiative she started with four other women approximately six years ago. Imagination Library is an organization started by Dolly Parton in her hometown in rural Tennessee in 1996. Her goal was to foster a love of reading to all children regardless of their family's income. Their mission is to provide preschool children and their families with the gift of a book each month. Ms. Morrell stated the program proved to be so successful that around the year 2000 Dolly Parton made the program available to communities all over the United States, Canada, the U.K. and Australia. She said over 57 million books have been mailed, with over 1,700 communities participating in Imagination Library, with more than 1.3 million children enrolled to date.

Ms. Morrell noted a chapter can be started by anyone interested in child literacy. Imagination Library of Talbot County is a local, independent non-profit that is solely funded through individual donations and community support. Ms. Morrell stated they have approximately 1,280 children enrolled in Talbot County. The cost of the program is twenty-five dollars a year, per family, for twelve books.



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Ms. Morrell then presented Critchlow Adkins Children's Center, which was started in 1970 by Harriet Critchlow and Janice Adkins. It began as Easton Daycare in St. Marks Church in Easton with the goal of providing quality daycare for mothers who wanted or needed to go back to work. She noted over the past forty-nine years they have grown to five sites with approximately three hundred and thirty children in the year-round program. They have a partnership with Talbot County Public Schools but are not part of the school system. Their sites are located in Easton, Cordova, St. Michaels, and White Marsh. They cover pre-school to before-and-after school programs up to fifth grade. Ms. Morrell reported they are building a site in the new Easton Elementary School for which they obtained a Community Development Block Grant. St. Michaels is their largest site due to the limited childcare available in the Bay Hundred area. She said as a non-profit, their mission is to supply quality, affordable, educational childcare. They are the only non-federally funded MSDE accredited childcare in Talbot County. She mentioned about 43% of their families receive some form of financial aid from them. Ms. Morrell noted that Critchlow and Adkins are a quiet partner with the local businesses, because many of their workers cannot afford childcare and without childcare they would be without workers, Critchlow Adkins covers that gap.

Department Report: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge reported on three meetings he and Ms. Vanhoover recently attended. The first was a program hosted by the Easton Economic Development Corporation regarding the future of the Easton Armory. Mr. Shoge noted the EEDC did a good job bringing together local community stakeholders to tour the Armory and give input on how the building can be transitioned and what is the best viable use of that space. Mr. Bautz added that it would take approximately two million dollars just to make improvements and stabilize the building. He noted the Armory is central to downtown Easton and many of its events, including the Waterfowl Festival each year.

Secondly, Mr. Shoge reported on the recent dedication of the airport tower by the County Council to Mike Henry, the longtime manager of Easton Airport and former member of EDC who retired in 2018.

Lastly, Mr. Shoge and Ms. Vanhooser had a meeting with several representatives from the Small Business Administration regarding the PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program, which one of our local tourism businesses was hoping to leverage. The SBA stated the business could not use PACE financing in conjunction with a SBA loan, which the business already had. Mr. Shoge said the Economic Development Department will continue to work with SBA to come up with a process on how businesses can access PACE while at the same time having a SBA loan.



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Director's Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser reported the Talbot County Department of Planning and Zoning and consultant, Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP has initiated a Master Plan for revitalization of the village of Cordova. They will be holding open meetings on Tuesday, August 20, 2019 at the Cordova Volunteer Fire Company Hall, 11864 Kitty's Corner Road, Cordova to discuss the plan. She added the County Council was approached by DNR to issue a letter of support for a potential Rails-to-Trails, initially going from Easton to the Frederick Douglass Park. Ms. Vanhooser said, at this point it is just a feasibility study, but DNR does have an easement on the old rail line. She added the County Council has awarded a bid for a small project and a Master Plan to begin at Frederick Douglass Park. Ms. Vanhooser reminded members that Plein Air, Easton Art Festival, opens today, July 11, 2019. This is the fifteenth year anniversary for Plein Air. She announced, thanks to some local donors, a traveling collection of Shore agricultural themed art will be purchased to tell the story of farming in Talbot County.

Chairman's Report: Jackie Wilson

Ms. Wilson stated a letter has been drafted to the Ethics Commission concerning sponsorship money being raised for the EDC Business Appreciation Breakfast. She added the next EDC meeting would be Thursday, September 5, 2019, since there will be no meeting in August.

County Council Report: Chuck Callahan

No Report

Department of Commerce Report: Nancy Lajoice (Sam Shoge)

Mr. Shoge gave an update on Commerce Department's Anniversary Citations given to Rusticana Pizza in Easton, celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary, the Oxford Ferry, for their three hundred and thirty-fifth anniversary, Crackerjacks Toy and Children's Books, and Eastern Shore Nursery.

Member Update

Donna Saathoff - Agriculture



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Ms. Saathoff reminded members this is the prime time for the farmers markets. She noted Talbot County is fortunate to have access to produce directly from the farm; many communities do not have the advantage of farm stands.

Ron Engle – Town of Easton

Mr. Engle mentioned the Avalon Foundation website has all the information concerning the Plein Air Festival.

Ted Bautz – Real Estate

Mr. Bautz reported the town of Easton has been designated as an Arts and Entertainment District which supports current and potential artist and art organizations with tax incentives to promote community involvement and revitalization.

Peter Dunbar – Oxford

Mr. Dunbar reported that the Oxford Wastewater Treatment Facility is nearly 85% complete.

Adjournment: With business, concluded Mr. Bautz moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Jafari. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 a.m.

Next meeting will be Thursday, September 5, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)