

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 4, 2020
Via Zoom

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chairperson Jackie Wilson called the meeting to order at 8:09 a.m.

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Chuck Callahan, Shannon Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Andy Hollis, Reza Jafari, Tina Jones, Sandy Pepe, Micah Risher, Donna Saathoff, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas, Cassandra Vanhooser, Jean Weisman, Jackie Wilson

Board Members Absent: Scott Beatty, Walter Chase, Craig Wanner

Staff Present: Kathy Megahan, Pam Keeton

Recording Secretary: Kathy Megahan

- II. Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the March 5, 2020, meeting were presented. Ms. Dill moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Engle seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote
- III. County Council Report:** Mr. Callahan acknowledged many who have contributed to the Emergency Services efforts. He reported that the County Council has created a flat budget with contingency money to support departments and delayed any tax increase in 2020. Permits and Inspections is operating, with two inspectors, that insures that construction projects continue.
- IV. Guest Speaker:** Clay Stamp, director of the Talbot County Department of Emergency Services and Assistant County Manager, spoke about county measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The EOC is part of a local, statewide, and national emergency management system that is designed to provide a cohesive response to emergencies and to issue a consistent daily messaging. County health officer, Dr. Fredia Wadley, is working with the Emergency Operations Center to provide information and direction on the county's public health response to COVID-19.

EOC working groups include human services, medical surge, sheltering, law enforcement, private-sector and business support. The business group is expected to grow as time goes on. Challenges for the EOC include concern for the emotional sustainability of the county effort, given there is no end in sight. First responder protection is a major concern, as 75 first responders and 9-1-1 dispatchers need to be healthy in order to respond to emergencies. Former employees are being recruited and private sector businesses have supported first responder's special needs during this time. Ms. Enloe has offered the Waterfowl Festival building as additional space for the hospital, if needed.

V. Chairman's Report

Ms. Wilson recommended that the Business Appreciation Breakfast be rescheduled. After much discussion, the EDC decided to postpone the event until later in the year, likely summer or early fall.

VI. Director's Report

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she is actively involved in Talbot County's COVID-19 response as part of the Emergency Operations Center team. She has been invited by Clay Stamp to conduct Private Sector Conference Calls twice a week from the EOC. She has been on the EOC for many years to provide communications support and as a liaison with the business community.

Many businesses need individual help finding and applying for state and federal programs. In response, Ms. Vanhooser formed a Rapid Response Team with other organizations including the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Easton Economic Development Commission, Discover Easton, Oxford Business Association, and St. Michaels Business Association.

The Rapid Response Team and departmental staff are reaching out to local businesses to maintain contact with their situations. Business owners seem to appreciate the calls. The department also conducted a business survey to assess the depth of the economic impact. The results of the survey were distributed and discussed. Ms. Vanhooser reported that she is working with the Town of Easton to support Aphena Pharma Solutions' expansion.

Ms. Vanhooser welcomed Pam Keeton, who was hired as a content creator and is filling the vacancy left by Ryan Snow. Communicating effectively is more important than ever, she said. Ms. Keeton is a retired lieutenant colonel from the U.S. Army, where she specialized in communications and public relations.

VIII. Town Reports

Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

IX. Comments from Board Members

Mr. Bautz noted that the information he's seen about the federal transfer payments seems to omit programs geared towards self-employed people. He believes the largest potential for business failure is with sole proprietors. Ms. Wilson reported that the potential for telephone and email fraud goes up during a time like this. She encourages businesses to stay in contact with their banks.

X. Adjournment

Ted Bautz made a motion to adjourn, with Ron Engle as second. The motion passed unanimously. The next meeting will be held on May 7, 2020, at 8 a.m.