**Economic Development Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, June 4, 2020**

Via Zoom

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

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

**Members Present:** Ted Bautz, Scott Beatty, Walter Chase, Shannon Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Andy Hollis, Tina Jones, Micah Risher, Cassandra Vanhooser, Craig Wanner, Jean Weisman, Jackie Wilson

**Board Members Absent**: Chuck Callahan, Reza Jafari, Sandi Pepe, Donna Saathoff, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas

**Staff Present:** Candace Harris, Pam Keeton

**Guest:** Melissa Kelley

**II. Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the May 7, 2020, meeting were presented. Mr. Wanner moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Bautz seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**III. County Council Report:** County Manager Andy Hollis gave the report from the County Council in place of Chuck Callahan, who had a previous commitment. He reported the County Council approved the new budget with no increases in income or property tax. He said that Mr. Callahan would like to offer his personal thanks to Ms. Vanhooser and her team, including the committee regarding the business grant program that is being developed.

**IV. Guest Speaker:** Margaret Enloe, Executive Director of Waterfowl Chesapeake, spoke about the importance of arts funding at the state and local levels and gave a brief overview of the economic impact of the Waterfowl Festival. As of today, a decision has not been made regarding the Waterfowl Festival, but an announcement is imminent. She encouraged EDC members to continue to help fund the arts and to advocate for state funding.

**V. Chairman’s Report**

Ms. Wilson noted that the EDC had postponed the Business Appreciate Breakfast at a previous meeting, with the intention of rescheduling in the summer or early fall. She then made the recommendation that the event be cancelled for this year and rescheduled for the Spring of 2021. There were no objections to Ms. Wilson’s recommendation.

Ms. Wilson also reported on formation of the Talbot CARES Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program. Talbot County received $6.4 million in funding from the CARES Act. Half of that money must be spent on health-related costs. The Talbot County Council was able to allocate the other half of the money. The Council set aside $1.2 million for a small business grant program. Ms. Wilson is serving on the task force that created the eligibility rules and the reporting guidelines.

Others on the task force include: Ron Engle, EDC Representative for the town of Easton; Sandi Pepe, EDC Representative for the town of Oxford; Jean Weisman, EDC Representative for the town of St. Michaels; and Walter Chase, EDC Representative for the town of Trappe. Rich Loeffler, a consultant for the Small Business Development Center; Angela Lane, Talbot County Finance Director; and Denitsa Meyers, Assistant Finance Director are the only non-EDC members serving on the task force.

Businesses with 50 employees or less may apply if they can show at least 25% loss of revenue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preference will be given to those who did not get PPP or EIDL money. The maximum amount any individual business may receive is $10,000.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she has received a list of 123 names of businesses in Talbot County that applied for the $10,000 grant from the Maryland Department of Commerce, but did not receive it. The grant program will be announced on the private-sector call on Friday, June 5, 2020, and applications will be accepted beginning June 8. Ms. Vanhooser believes that there will be an influx of businesses that request funding and that the money will be distributed quickly. The County Council also allocated $1.2 million for individual assistance. That program is being administered by the Department of Social Services and the Finance Director and Assistant Director.

Ms. Wilson also noted that the EDC position vacated by Andrea Lev needs to be filled. She asked EDC members to bring names for the vacant committee seat to the next meeting or to send an email to her or Ms. Vanhooser with the recommendations.

**VI. Director’s Report**

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she is continuing the twice weekly private-sector calls to address needs in the business community. These calls have been well received, and that businesses have been particularly keen to hear from Talbot County Health Officer Dr. Fredia Wadley. Ms. Vanhooser plans to eventually transition those calls to a podcast format. The plan is to have the podcasts at least once a month after the pandemic abates. These calls have been a real lifeline to business owners. There are typically approximately 50 people on every call, with numbers as high as 100 on some calls. The call on Friday, June 5, 2020 will be discussing the individual and business grant programs. The small business grant program will be ready to launch next week.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she finds it interesting that she has answer many inquiries about the Talbot County Business Center in the past month. She has reported that the County Council has approved moving forward with an intent to apply for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund to continue the Goldsbourgh Neck Road improvements for the Mistletoe Hall Commerce-Business Park. Economic Development has been working with the Town of Easton on marketing matters for Mistletoe Hall. The project is scheduled to be completed in September 2021.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she was part of group of economic development directors that presented to the University of Maryland Shore Regional Health strategic planning group. She addressed the economic outlook for Talbot County and then answered questions from the committee. Ms. Vanhooser also moderated a Zoom call with Senator Ben Cardin for the Eastern Shore Economic Development directors and Chamber of Commerce organizations.

Nancy LaJoice reported that the state’s loan and grant applications continue to be processed. About have of the recipients are in the process of receiving funding. Such an influx of applications that the funding was used up in the first two days of opening up for accepting applications. The applications that are not funded are being referred to each county to see what funding they can offer.

**VIII. Town Reports**

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

**X. Adjournment**

Ted Bautz made a motion to adjourn, with Jean Weisman offering a second. The motion passed unanimously. The next meeting will be held on July 2, 2020, at 8 a.m. via Zoom.