

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 3, 2020
Via Zoom

I. Welcome and Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Shannon Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Dave Harper, Andy Hollis, Reza Jafari, Sandi Pepe, Micah Risher, Cassandra Vanhooser, Scott Warner, Jean Weisman, and Jackie Wilson

Board Members Absent: Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Donna Saathoff, Al Silverstein, Terenda Thomas, and Craig Wanner

Staff Present: Pam Keeton and Candace Harris

Guests: Melissa Kelly, Nancy LaJoice, and Merry Mears

II. Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the November 3, 2020, meeting were presented. Reza Jafari moved the minutes be accepted as written. Ron Engle seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

III. County Council Report: Andy Hollis reported that Chuck Callahan is the incoming Council president beginning Dec. 7. He also reported that Mr. Callahan and the Council recognize Ms. Vanhooser's extensive work with the grant programs and in providing information to the business community to help them get through the pandemic.

IV. Chairman's Report: Jackie Wilson announced that Andy Hollis is retiring from the County and thanked him for his service to the community. She asked him to make a few comments about his time as county manager. Mr. Hollis was brief, stating that it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve. He also thanked Jean Weisman for her mentorship early in his career.

Ms. Wilson then introduced Debbie Walsworth of BSC Group, LLC and welcomed her to the commission.

December is the time for elections, and Ms. Wilson announced that her year as chairperson would come to an end in January. She noted that Mr. Jafari, who is currently

serving as the vice-chairman, has done an excellent job, and she asked if he was willing to accept the nomination as the next chairman of the EDC. Mr. Jafari accepted, and Ms. Wilson asked if anyone else wished to make a nomination. Hearing no nominations, she opened the floor to nominations for vice-chairman. Ms. Enloe asked about the duties of the chairman and vice-chairman, which both Ms. Wilson and Ms. Vanhooser explained. No volunteers were forthcoming, and Ms. Wilson said that she would leave the nominations open until the next meeting. Elections will be held in January.

Ms. Wilson thanked Ms. Vanhooser and staff for all the support they gave her during her tenure as chairperson. Ms. Vanhooser said it was a pleasure to see Ms. Wilson grow into her role as chairperson,

- V. **Director's Report:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that she and the staff have processed 80 applications for the Talbot County Restaurant Relief Fund Grant. Angela Lane and Denitsa Myers helped review the files and all will be approved pending the resolution of a few outstanding issues with some applications. She also reported that she and her staff personally reached out to all the restaurants and that many reported they are at medium to high risk of going out of business if the pandemic continues. She also said that she had asked on the application if business owners would like to be referred to a counselor from the Small Business Development Center and many said yes. Ms. Vanhooser added that seafood markets with carry out services and caterers were included in the fund.

Ms. Weisman asked why some restaurants did not participate, and Ms. Vanhooser explained that some either didn't need assistance or were part of large chains that had corporate support. Mr. Bautz asked what the amount of each grant will be, and Ms. Vanhooser said that each would receive approximately \$6,600, depending upon how many of the current applicants are declared eligible.

In addition to the restaurant grant program, Ms. Vanhooser reported the Talbot County CARES Small Business Grant is still active. A total of 125 applications have been approved, and only three remain open. So far \$1.172 million has been approved for payment. The department recently received an additional \$250,000 from County leadership for the program and the fourth round of grants opened on Monday, Nov. 30. The deadline to apply is Dec. 11.

Ms. Enloe asked about the timeline in which the money must be spent and Ms. Vanhooser stated that the money must be used by Dec. 30. She added that businesses must include expenses incurred between March 16, 2020, and Dec. 30, 2020, and that every recipient must submit a report with invoices and proof of payment.

Mr. Jafari asked what will happen with any money left over from the grants. Mr. Hollis explained that the County Council is examining possible options that might be allowed under the federal rules. He added that in the end, any money not spent would have to be returned to the State. Mr. Jafari mentioned that some communities are looking at donating left over CARES funds to the Maryland Food Bank. Ms. Vanhooser explained

that the executive committee is working closely with Jan Willis to determine if or how they might be supported.

Ms. Vanhooser also reported on communications efforts to keep the business community informed. She said consistency and intensity are keys to success in any endeavor, and she thanked Ms. Keeton for her role in the department's success. Ms. Wilson expressed appreciation for the department's efforts as a voice for the business community during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

- VI. Maryland Department of Commerce:** Nancy LaJoice reported that the Export Maryland Program provides grants of up to \$5,000 to Maryland businesses that want to market internationally, and that the grants can be used for virtual expositions in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

- VII. Town Reports:** Town representatives gave reports on happenings in and around their jurisdictions.

- VIII. Comments from Board Members and Guests:** Other members of the EDC and guests reported out on their activities.

- IX. Next Meeting:** January 7, 2021, at 8 a.m.

- X. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:53 a.m.