

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, April 1, 2021

8 a.m.

Via Zoom

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Reza Jafari called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Roll Call

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Chuck Callahan, Cliff Coppersmith, Shannon Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Reza Jafari, Amy Kreiner, Dana Newman, Sandi Pepe, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Terenda Thomas, Cassandra Vanhooser, Debbie Walsworth, and Jackie Wilson

Members Absent: Walter Chase, Donna Saathoff, Craig Wanner, and Jean Weisman.

Staff: Pam Keeton

Guests: Susie Hayward, Nancy LaJoice, Cristy Morrell, Scott Warner, and Tracy Ward.

II. Guest Speaker: Dr. Cliff Coppersmith gave an overview of Chesapeake College, its budget, and future plans. One priority is to expand workforce development. There is also a new construction project on campus in partnership with Shore Rivers that will mitigate run-off and create an outdoor lab and hiking trails.

III. Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the March 4, 2021, meeting were presented. Amy Kreiner made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Micah Risher seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

IV. County Council Report: Council President and EDC Liaison Chuck Callahan announced that the Council will discuss the budget during its April 13 meeting, and there will be two public hearings on May 4 at the new Easton Elementary School. He discussed the \$10 million capital projects planned, which include a new office for the sheriff's department, roof repair/replacement on several schools, and other projects. Mr. Callahan also informed the commission that the County Council sent a letter to the state objecting to the proposed Bay Bridge expansion through Talbot County.

V. Chairman's Report: Mr. Jafari announced that the April 30 Business Appreciation Summit will be held virtually via Zoom. Online "mingling" will begin at 8 a.m., and the program will begin at 8:30 a.m. He invited businesses to organize watch parties at their offices and to invite employees and family members to tune in. He also announced that \$2,000, \$1,000, and \$500 sponsorships are available.

VI. Director's Report: Ms. Vanhooser reported that april is the busiest month of the year for the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. The Business Appreciation Summit is the department's signature event, and she asked EDC members to invited friends and community leaders

She joked that she had promised never to say the "G" word again, but she went on to announce new small business grants from the State that we are about to roll out. Those include: Restaurants (new rules) - \$135,635; Hotels (new rules) - \$61,652; Online sales - \$3,082; Nonprofits (through DHCD) - \$123,000

Workforce (or the lack thereof) is one of the biggest challenges for businesses in Talbot County. Ms. Vanhooser is working with the Department of Labor to develop several virtual job fairs.

Talbot County Economic Development also is sponsoring an Apprenticeships Orientation Meeting on May 19 at 8:30 a.m. in partnership with the Talbot County Public Schools and the Department of Labor. Ms. Vanhooser also noted that National Travel and Tourism Week is May 2-8. The department will be planning some special programming.

Finally, Ms. Vanhooser suggested that the commission consider sending a letter to the state in support of the county council's letter against the bay bridge expansion in Talbot County. No action was taken.

Krista Boothby will join the tourism office on May 3.

VII. Maryland Department of Commerce: Ms. LaJoice talked about new grants available through the state and announced that Choptank Transport will be expanding into Talbot County.

VIII. Town Reports: Town representatives gave reports on happenings in and around their jurisdictions.

IX. Comments from Board Members and Guests: Kimberly Kratovil from U.S. Senator Ben Cardin's Office mentioned that the federal government is finishing up specifics on new grants.

X. Next Meeting: May 6, 2021, at 8 a.m.

XI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:59 a.m.