

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, June 3, 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, Clifford Coppersmith, Shannon Dill, Ronald Engle, Margaret Enloe, Reza Jafari, Amy Kreiner, Sandi Pepe, Micah Risher, Donna Saathoff, Clay Stamp, Terenda Thomas, Cassandra Vanhooser, Jean Weisman, Jackie Wilson, Deborah Walsworth, Scott Warner

Members Absent: Walter Chase, Craig Wanner

Guests: Susie Hayward, Nancy LaJoice, Cristy Morrell, Tracy Ward

II. Guest Speaker: Jayme Hayes, President, Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore

Junior Achievement (JA) is a nonprofit that acts as a liaison between the business community and the school system to identify workforce needs in the business community, then creates curriculum for schools to produce future workers to fill the pipeline.

JA has been in existence for 100 years and has experienced a continued increase in student participation in the past 5 years. Current programs are designed for online learning, as well as classroom and experiential settings. The JA Inspire program is a career showcase giving insight into the day-in-the-life of actual jobs. JA identifies student transferrable skills starting in 8th grade to assist them in making early learning choices toward a future career more to their abilities.

JA is 65% through a \$6 million funding campaign to build an experiential learning facility in Salisbury in the old K-Mart building serving all nine counties. They are planning to open in two years.

JA Board is made up of an advisory board that includes representation from all nine counties and an executive board. JA encourages businesses and other nonprofits to partner with them to design curriculums.

- III. Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the May 6, 2021, meeting were presented. Debbie Walsworth made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Ted Bautz seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
- IV. County Council Report:** Council President and EDC Liaison Chuck Callahan reported that the County Council approved the FY 2022 budget. Significant expenditures included an improved retirement program for Sheriff's Office. Finance Director Angela Lane is retiring in June. The Emergency Operations Center stood down after 444 days of activation for the pandemic.
- V. Chairman's Report:** Mr. Jafari discussed the challenge of workforce development and the availability of workers and materials for construction. Tourism and EDC boards need to work together to solve these issues related to these issues.
- VI. Director's Report:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that the department has three Commerce grants and one DHCD grant program at this time. Those include:

- Third Round Restaurant Relief Fund Grant.
- Third Round Hotel Grant.
- A small Online Sales / Telework Grant for businesses that expanded their online sales during the pandemic.
- Nonprofit Grant.

The staff is spending significant time trying to get the previous applicants to turn in their final reports. These grants come with the same requirements as any state or federal grant, including PPP.

Further news regarding grants: Angela Lane, our longtime finance director, is retiring on June 11 and Denitsa Myers, who was our grants guru, took a job with the comptroller's office. Ms. Vanhooser and her staff are trying to get as much as possible finalized before Angela's departure.

On the business front, a number of businesses in the county are expanding or transitioning to new owners. We continue to work with those businesses to connect with the resources they need to be successful.

Ms. Vanhooser is also continuing to work on the **Eastern Shore Recovery Project**, which she noted been one of the best "group projects" she's had the pleasure to working on in a long time. Partners include:

- Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative
- Lower Shore Workforce Investment Alliance

- Caroline County Economic Development
- Dorchester County Economic Development
- Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore
- Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board

As a reminder, this project is funded by an EDA grant through the Mid-Shore Regional Council. The group hired Dr. Memo Diriker at Salisbury University to create a survey that will go out to businesses in early June, and she will be calling on her partners in Talbot County to help spread the word. Also, the team is planning a public roll out of the project in the very near future. So look for more on this.

For her final item, Ms. Vanhooser introduced Krista Boothby, who has joined the department as economic development and tourism manager. She has a wealth of experience in tourism, but she came from Lynchburg, Virginia, where she worked in a combined department. I have known Krista for quite some time, and I could not be more pleased that she has joined us.

VII. Maryland Department of Commerce: Relief grant is closing, \$9,000 grant to small businesses. Choptank Transport is expanding to Easton campus. Though they ran into delays, the project is going well and planning a fall opening, hiring 50 employees in technology positions.

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

X. Next Meeting: Cassandra proposed cancelling the July 2 EDC meeting to allow for travel over the Independence Day holiday. Ms. Weisman made the motion to cancel the meeting, and Ms. Kreiner seconded the motion. The motion passed was approved. The next meeting will be September 2.

XI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.