

Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 1, 2022

8 a.m.

Via Zoom

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Reza Jafari called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Clifford Coppersmith, Shannon Potter Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Reza Jafari, Jimmy Jaramillo, Ken Kozel, Amy Kreiner, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Rob Straebel, Cassandra Vanhooser, Jackie Wilson, and Debbie Walsworth

Members Absent: Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Donna Saathoff, and Terenda Thomas

Staff Present: Krista Boothby

Guests: Tucker Bullock, Holly DeKarske, Helga Einhorn, Susie Hayward, John Horner, Nancy LaJoice, Cristy Morrell, Dana Newman, Scott Warner

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Coppersmith made a motion to accept the minutes from the September 1, 2022, meeting as written. Mr. Bautz seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Welcome and Introduction of Guest Speaker

Mr. Jafari introduced Mr. Ken Kozel, president and CEO of the University of Maryland Shore Regional Health.

Mr. Kozel reported on updates regarding UM Shore Regional Health's strategic plan and the goal of completing the building of the new regional medical center to be located in Easton. The Certificate of Need will be submitted in January. If all goes well, the center will break ground in 2025, with completion slated for 2028. (Presentation attached.)

IV. Chuck Callahan, President, Talbot County Council – Reported by Clay Stamp

Mr. Stamp reported on significant County projects, including the acquisition of a new Sheriff's Office, plans for a new Health Department, and updates to the Talbot County Community Center.

Mr. Stamp invited EDC members to the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Talbot County Council members and congratulated Chuck Callahan and Pete Leshner on their reelection. Mr. Stamp thanked Laura Price, Corey Pack, and Frank Divilio for their service on the Council.

V. **Chairman's Report – Reza Jafari**

Mr. Jafari professed thanks to Jackie Wilson who has served the Economic Development Commission as Vice Chair, Chair, and Past Chair, as well as committee work.

Mr. Jafari informed the commission of the forthcoming inauguration ceremony for the incoming governor on January 18, 2023. He encouraged EDC members to attend.

Mr. Jafari also encouraged EDC members to attend the upcoming Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference, January 3-6, 2023 in Cambridge.

VI. **Director's Report – Cassandra M. Vanhooser**

Ms. Vanhooser added her thanks to Mr. Kozel for sharing his vision for the new hospital. She noted that UM Shore Regional Health is Talbot County's largest single employer. We must all do our part to continue to advocate for this project and help make this dream a reality.

Rural Economic Development Fund: The Mid-Shore Regional Council is expecting an announcement soon on the approval of the Rural Economic Development Fund projects submitted by Talbot County. The County's senior leadership team is working with Scott Warner to execute an MOU with MSRC so that we will be ready when the announcement is made.

Ms. Vanhooser is working with the County Attorney and the County Finance Office to memorialize the guidelines for distributing the grant funds. We have elected to go with a reimbursement request system much like the one used for the County's Community Development Block Grants.

- Reimbursements may be requested quarterly.
- Participants will be required to submit monthly reports to the Mid-Shore, which will be shared with the County.
- Projects will be closely monitored to make sure the grant recipients are making progress on their projects.
- Our grants committee will be pressed into service to help review projects from time to time.
- We want to be ready to go when the money is announced.

Scott Warner, executive director of the MSRC, added that he believes the governor will make an announcement about the fund before Christmas and that he has every reason to believe that all 14 Talbot County projects will be approved.

Eastern Shore Business Sentiment Survey: The semi-annual survey opens today, December 1. Ms. Vanhooser asked that each EDC member and guest commit to take this survey and share it with others in their circle of influence. The survey closes on January 2. This survey was created by BEACON and is part of the Economic Resiliency Toolkit that is featured on the Delmarva Index.

Presentations and Meetings: Each County department had the opportunity to meet with all five new Council members for the first time on Nov. 30 and present an overview of the department's work. Ms. Vanhooser also spoke at the Sherwood Seminar and continued efforts to share the tools from the Resiliency Toolkit and the work of the office. Also, Waterfowl Festival was very successful. The department again hosted our Coffee and Conservation event and enjoyed a very nice turnout, including the Lt. Governor and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio.

Talbot County Business Resource Fair: Ms. Vanhooser asked EDC members and guests to mark their calendars for January 21. Talbot County is partnering with Building African American Minds, the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, and Talbot Mentors to hold a Resource Fair for Small Businesses. Rich Loeffler with the Small Business Development Center will be our featured speaker, and he will discuss financing for small businesses. Other resource partners will be on hand to answer questions and offer additional information.

Business News: Ms. Vanhooser shared that Aphenia Pharma Solutions will announce this week that they are listing their 27-acre campus for sale. They do not plan to leave Talbot County, and they will seek a long-term lease with the new owner.

Opportunities to Serve in the New Year: will be upon us in the blink of an eye, and we have a number of new initiatives to get going. I am going to ask each of you to serve on at least one committee. I have a Google form already designed and ready to send to you today where you may sign up for your preference.

- 1) Business Appreciation Summit Committee (fundraising)
- 2) Inclusive Ventures Steering Committee
- 3) Visitors Center Feasibility Study (at least one person from EDC should serve on this committee.)
- 4) Strategic Plan Committee (the more the merrier on this one)

Final Word: To close out the year, Ms. Vanhooser thanked EDC members for their service. "I have been proud of your work / our work this year," she noted. "2023 is going to be a huge year for us, and I want you to come back energized and ready roll after the New Year."

VII. Town Reports

Town representatives reported on information regarding their jurisdictions.

VIII. Comments from Board Members and Guests

Board members reported on upcoming events and initiatives related to their businesses.

IX. Maryland Department of Commerce

Ms. Nancy LaJoice submitted a written report stating the department is awaiting the announcements of the Project Restore grant awards, the Manufacturing 4.0 grant awards and the Maryland Rural Economic Development Fund awards.

For a business that took an EIDL Loan from the SBA during the COVID shutdown period, an additional payment deferment opportunity is available. This opportunity was announced in March. Some business owners may not be aware of the opportunity:

X. Election of Officers

Mr. Jafari presented the slate of officers with Mr. Kozel nominated as chairman and Debbie Walsworth nominated as vice chairman. There were no nominations from the floor. Mr. Engle made a motion to vote and Ms. Kreiner seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Jafari thanked Ms. Wilson effusively for her service as chairman and immediate past chairman. He also thanked Ms. Enloe for her service on the EDC board as she announced her resignation. Mr. Stamp thanked Mr. Jafari for his service as chairman.

XI. Upcoming Meetings

- Dec. 5 – County Council Swearing-In Ceremony, MEBA
- Dec. 7 - MEDA Rural Economic Development Session – Lower Eastern Shore, University of Maryland Eastern Shore
- March 2 – Quarterly EDC Meeting

XII. Adjournment

Dr. Coppersmith made the motion to adjourn; Mr. Engle seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 a.m.