

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 7, 2023

8 a.m.

Via Zoom

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Ken Kozel called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Chuck Callahan, Dr. Clifford Coppersmith, Shannon Potter Dill, Reza Jafari, Jimmy Jaramillo (via Zoom), Ken Kozel, Amy Kreiner (via Zoom), Chris Kleppinger (via Zoom), Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Rob Straebel, Terenda Thomas, Cassandra Vanhooser, Deborah Walsworth, Jackie Wilson

Members Absent: Walter Chase, David Montgomery, Donna Saathoff

Guests: Nancy LaJoice, Dana Newman, Ryan Snow, Scott Warner

II. Approval of Amended Agenda and Meeting Minutes

Mr. Kozel noted some corrections to the agenda, including the June 2024 meeting date. His call for approval passed unanimously. He also noted the same corrections for the meeting minutes from September 7, 2023. Again, his call for approval of the minutes as amended passed unanimously.

III. Election of Officers

Mr. Kozel noted that the executive committee put together a slate of officers which was sent out prior to the meeting. Debbie Walsworth, currently vice chairperson, was eligible to move to chairperson. Dr. Cliff Coppersmith had agreed to be considered for vice chairperson for 2024. Mr. Kozel opened the floor for additional nominations, but no one volunteered. Mr. Jafari made a motion that the candidates be approved; Mr. Bautz seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IV. Airfield Modernization Program

The meeting was held in the Easton Airport offices with snacks from Sugar Buns served as a holiday treat. Airport Manager Micah Risher gave a thorough overview of the upcoming airfield modernization program that will take approximately 8 years to complete. The construction phase has begun, and people will soon see a fence going up around the Talbot County Business Center. Mr. Risher estimated that some 40 tons of dirt will be needed for this project. Complete information can be found at www.eastonairport.com/projects/. The public can also sign up for updates on this page.

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

Mr. Callahan reported that the county has several large projects that will come to fruition in 2024. Talbot County Parks and Recreation is building a new gymnasium at the Community Center. The new Health Department will be located at Achievement Park on Idlewild and will open in the summer of 2024. The new 9-1-1 center at Mary's Court is being renovated and will be ready to be occupied by October 2024. The county also will add a Top Golf-like facility at Hog Neck Golf Course.

When asked about the projected state budget deficit, Mr. Callahan noted that the county's fund balance is strong and should be able to see them through to better times. He also thanked Ken Kozel for his service as the EDC chairman for 2023 and said he looks forward to working with him on the new regional medical center in Easton.

VI. Director's Report – Cassandra M. Vanhooser

Minority Business Resource Fair: Ms. Vanhooser reported that she and her partners at the Multicultural Resource Center and Uniting for Entrepreneurship – Talbot County held a Business Resource Fair for minorities on October 14. In spite of the rain, a moderate crowd attended. The entire program was presented in both Spanish and English. A total of 10 resource partners exhibited, and Luis Colorado Diaz from the Small Business Development Center was the speaker. Special Secretary Maria Martinez attended on behalf of the Governor of the State of Maryland.

Talbot Works Business Academy: Both of the resource fairs held in 2023 laid the groundwork for the Business Academy that was funded by the Maryland Rural Economic Development Fund. The department is accepting applications from small business owners who wish to participate. The County Council awarded the bid to Will Holmes of Will Holmes Consulting in Baltimore to offer this program. He also offers this program for Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University, and the Small Business Administration, as well as Anne Arundel and Charles counties.

Business Appreciation Summit: Ms. Vanhooser asked the group to mark their calendars for the Talbot County Business Appreciation Summit on May 2 at the Tidewater Inn. The department is currently accepting nominations for the annual Community Impact Awards. You will find the nomination form on the TalbotWorks.org website. The deadline for submissions is January 15.

Eastern Shore Business Sentiment Survey: Ms. Vanhooser encouraged attendees to take the bi-annual Business Sentiment Survey. She noted that she will send the link in an email later in the day. It's important that you take the survey, she said. We are attempting to collect data over time from business owners up and down the Eastern Shore. I always share this information with you and with the County Council. This is a project that is part of our Eastern Shore Economic Resiliency Toolkit.

Congratulations to Mr. Walter Chase: Ms. Vanhooser congratulated Mr. Chase, who was named Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer by the Rural Maryland Council for his leadership, dedication, and noteworthy volunteer achievement beyond the call of one's professional duties to help improve his community. Walter was honored recently with citations and a standing ovation at Mid-Shore Regional Council meeting at the

Maryland Association of Counties. Mr. Chase has been a long-standing member of the Economic Development Commission. Ms. Vanhooser thanked him for his service.

Thank you to Ken Koziel: Ms. Vanhooser thanked Mr. Koziel for his service as chairman of the EDC in 2023. She told the group that they don't realize how much she communicates with the chairman and relies on their expertise and guidance. "Ken has been a terrific chairman, and I didn't want this day to go by without having you all acknowledge the work that he has done as chairman," she said.

VII. Town Reports

Town representatives reported on news from their jurisdictions.

VIII. Comments from Board Members and Guests

No comments from board members or guests.

IX. Final Remarks and Announcement of Upcoming Meetings

Talbot County EDC Meeting – March 7, 2024
Talbot County Business Appreciation Summit – May 2, 2024
Talbot County EDC Meeting – June 6, 2024
Talbot County EDC Meeting – September 5, 2024
Talbot County EDC Meeting – December 5, 2024

X. Adjournment

Mr. Bautz made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Jafari seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.