

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 6, 2024

8 a.m.

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Van Lennep Auditorium

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chairman Cliff Coppersmith called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and welcomed the group to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Dr. Cliff Coppersmith, Shannon Potter Dill, Reza Jafari, Ken Kozel, Amy Kreiner, Chris Kleppinger, David Montgomery, Micah Risher, Cassandra Vanhooser, Jackie Wilson

Members Absent: Al Bond, Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Jimmy Jaramillo, Donna Saathoff, Clay Stamp, Rob Straebel, Terenda Thomas, Deborah Walsworth

Guests: Kristen Greenaway, Nancy LaJoice, Cheryl Lewis, Jessica Morris, Dana Newman, Daniel Schneckenburger, Ryan Snow, Scott Warner

Staff: Kristen Goller

II. Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes

Dr. Coppersmith noted that the minutes were sent prior to the meeting and asked if anyone had comments or corrections. Mr. Bautz made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Jafari seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Kristen Greenaway, President and CEO, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

The meeting was held at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and hosted by President and CEO Kristen Greenaway. Ms. Greenaway welcomed the EDC and began by highlighting the museum's mission.

CBMM has not completed an economic impact study since 2019, but its impact can be counted in more than dollars. We are an amazingly important community asset, Ms. Greenaway stressed, and that's the key part of the mission we want to achieve here. She hopes the community will embrace the knowledge that the museum is preserving the stories of families and the region's cultural heritage for the generations to come.

Ms. Greenaway invited EDC members to visit the new Welcome Center that is adjacent to the Van Lennep Auditorium where the meeting took place. The new building reorients the entrance to the 18-acre waterfront campus and displays vessel that have been in storage more than 40 years. She also gave an overview of the shipwright program and other elements of the campus master plan.

Housing for employees is one of the biggest challenges for the museum, Ms. Greenaway said in response to a question from an EDC member. She also discussed the museum's acquisition of the Crab Claw Restaurant building and parking lot and The Patriot tour boat. Both were purchased with internal loans and not affecting the museum's operating budget. They should be paid off in five years.

IV. Talbot County Council Report – Reported by Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager

Ms. Morris began with greetings from Mr. Stamp and Mr. Callahan, both of whom had a conflict with the June EDC meeting. She congratulated Ms. Vanhooser and her staff for a successful Business Appreciation Summit. Chris Pilkerton was an inspiring speaker, and it's important to see and acknowledge the work taking place in the business community, Ms. Morris noted.

The Talbot County Council passed its Fiscal Year 2025 budget on May 28. It's about \$164 million, which is a large budget, Ms. Morris said that there are no changes to the property tax rate or the income tax rate. The County is funding the Talbot County Public Schools at about \$54.5 million dollars, which is an increase of \$3.65 million from FY24 and about \$2.8 million above the required local share funding. This will be funded through a 4-cent education supplement on local tax bills. The County Council also introduced Resolution 359 which, if passed by a majority vote of the Council, will extend add a question to the November ballot requesting an extension of the one-cent public safety supplement for five years. Public safety is a priority for this Council as it has been for others.

The Chapel District Elementary School project in Cordova will start this summer with Whiting Turner as the general contractor. Total cost of that project is approximately \$38 million; the County portion is about \$25 million. The Talbot County Health Department is moving to its new facility at Achievement Park, which is the former Cadmus Building. It's a terrific location right on rest of trails which makes it walkable for our community. Ms. Morris noted that the County has had a lot of inquiry about now the Health Department property on Hanson Street. Council has not made a determination on what will happen there.

Talbot County has a small amount left from its American Rescue Plan Act funding. A subcommittee chaired by Councilman Pete Leshner will make final recommendations to the County Council, and that money will be allocated soon. The state of Maryland is joining other states around the nation to celebrate our nation's semiquincentennial. The County Council will be appointed a Talbot 250 Commission soon.

V. Director's Report – Cassandra M. Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser began her report by thanking Ms. Morris. She said it's important to hear from the County Council as economic development touches so many different aspects of the County government. Also, Jessica likes to hide in the background, but the County staff count on her for so many things, Ms. Vanhooser said. "She is a rock!"

Ms. Vanhooser's presentation was delivered in the form of a PowerPoint Presentation, which will be included with the minutes.

Wittman Wharf Seafood: Ms. Vanhooser reported that U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen were joined by Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz and Maryland Department of Agriculture Kevin Atticks at Wittman Wharf to announce federal legislation that would help with efforts to eradicate blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay. Nick was also one of the award winners from the Business Appreciation Summit and he is a business owner Ms. Vanhooser and her team work with often as he works to expand his business both at Wittman and on Tilghman Island. Mr. Hargrove now employee 75 people in his seafood processing businesses and produces 100,000 pounds of catfish fillets at his plant in Tilghman every week.

Talbot Works Business Academy: Ms. Vanhooser reported that the department graduated 15 members of the Talbot Works Business Academy at the Talbot County Council meeting on April 9. Each business owner was required to attend eight 3-hour sessions in successive weeks, complete cashflow projects for their business, and give present their growth plans to a group of judges. Each participant will receive a \$2,000 grant from an anonymous donor via the Mid-Shore Community Foundation to invest in their business. Ms. Vanhooser said that of all of the things she has worked on in the nearly 12 years she has served Talbot County, she believes this is the most impactful. Cohort #2 will begin on September 10. She asked EDC members to refer business owners for the new class.

Talbot County Business Appreciation Summit: The 17th annual Summit was an absolute success. Ms. Vanhooser calls the event Talbot County's "love letter to the business community." Former U.S. SBA Interim Director Chris Pilkerton was the speaker. He was informative and funny, and brought a lighthearted feel to the event. Community Impact Award Winners included: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum Welcome Center Project, The Mews Project in Oxford, Tilghman Island Seafood, Willow Construction, and Easton Utilities President and CEO Hugh Grunden.

On the Horizon: Ms. Vanhooser summarized several events and initiatives that are coming up for the department during the summer months. She is hosting a "Let's Talk Numbers" presentation with the ESRGC at the Talbot County Free Library on June 18 to highlight the tools available on the Delamarva Index. Business Consultant and SBA Small Business of the Year Owner Will Holmes will be in Talbot County on September 14 for his Money Maryland Expo. This event will be held at the BAAM Athletic Center and will include a business resource fair for small businesses.

In addition, several issues are taking shape that will involve the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Those include a community conversation on rail trails, a proposed increase in the public accommodations tax, and the department's strategic plan.

Board Member Nominations: Ms. Vanhooser also reported that the EDC has one vacancy that needs to be filled. She has spoken to Ms. Walsworth, Dr. Coppersmith, and Mr. Kozel about this issue. They agree that John Horner, the new president and CEO of Easton Utilities, would make a good candidate. Dr. Coppersmith opened the floor for nominations, but none were forthcoming. The EDC agreed to leave the nominations open and to vote by email before the next meeting.

VI. Town Reports

Town representatives reported on news from their jurisdictions.

VII. Comments from Board Members and Guests

No comments from board members or guests.

VIII. Final Remarks and Announcement of Upcoming Meetings

- Let's Talk Numbers Presentation – June 18, 2024
- Talbot County EDC Meeting – September 5, 2024
- Money Maryland Expo – September 14, 2024
- Talbot County EDC Meeting – December 5, 2024

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m. Those wishing to take a tour of the new CBMM Welcome Center were directed to meet on the veranda immediately following the meeting.