

**Economic Development Commission  
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025

8 a.m.

Mamma Maria's, 4021 Main St. Trappe, MD 21673

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Debbie Walsworth at 8:05 a.m. She invited Mr. Mitchell, owner of Mamma Maria's, to offer welcoming remarks. Afterwards, Ms. Walsworth recognized Ms. Vanhooser for her recent recognition as Maryland's Tourism Person of the Year, which is the highest tourism honor bestowed within the state.

**Members Present:** Ted Bautz, John Horner, Reza Jafari, Ken Kozel, Dr. Shannon Potter Dill, Barbara Ranson, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Cassandra Vanhooser, Deborah Walsworth, Jackie Wilson

**Members Absent:** Al Bond, Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Sr., Dr. Clifford Coppersmith, Chris Kleppinger, Amy Kreiner, Dr. David Montgomery, Rob Straebel, Terenda Thomas,

**Guests:** Liz Connelly, Kurt Fuchs, Alyssa Hastings, Scott Hines, Kimberly Kratovil, Tom Mitchell, Cristy Morrell, Jessica Mumbulo, Dana Newman, and Scott Warner

**Staff:** Kristen Goller and Ryan Snow

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 4, 2025**

Ms. Walsworth noted that the minutes were sent prior to the meeting and asked if anyone had comments or corrections. Mr. Jafari made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Dr. Potter Dill seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**III. Guest Speaker – Scott Hines, Regional Director, Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has six regions throughout Maryland. Mr. Hines serves as the Regional Director for the Eastern Region, which includes Maryland's Eastern Shore Counties except for Cecil County. Talbot County financially supports SBDC, with other funding come from federal,

state and other sources. SBDC's vision is to create a more prosperous Maryland. To achieve this vision, Mr. Hines explained that his office helps new businesses get started, existing businesses expand, aid businesses in distress, and offer legacy-planning support to businesses. Since he started a year ago, Mr. Hines has been working closely with Ms. Vanhooser. The two have charted a course forward to make SBDC more accessible to Talbot County businesses. The two meet monthly, SBDC provides quarterly reports, and an SBDC staffer will offer office hours on Bay Street once a week beginning in January.

#### **IV. Council Report – Clay Stamp**

Mr. Stamp offered a Council report as Mr. Callahan was unable to attend. The current Council is entering its fourth year, so they are striving to close out existing projects. These projects have focused on stimulating the economy and included construction and road improvements. They've also focused on improving the county's communication strategy through the addition of a Public Information Officer. Federal and state uncertainties are causing concern. Talbot County is assuming a fiscal impact is forthcoming, as additional responsibilities are passed down to the county levels. The Council has been preparing for this though, so the county is in a good place overall.

#### **V. Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan**

Ms. Vanhooser began by recognizing and thanking Ms. Walsworth for guiding the strategic planning process over the past year along with the other members of the steering committee. The planning process ran concurrently with the county's update to its comprehensive plan. The strategic plan is meant to serve as the foundation for the comprehensive plan's chapters on economic development and tourism.

To move the strategic plan forward, the tourism board and economic development commission need to approve the plan and then recommend it be put before county council for adoption. A work session would then be requested with Council. Followed by, if Council supports, adoption of the plan. Mr. Stamp noted that approval within the first quarter of 2026 would be ideal. The plan was previously presented to the EDC and made available via email. The Tourism Board moved it forward at their last meeting.

Discussion ensued before Mr. Jafari motioned for the Economic Development Commission to support the Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism

Strategic Plan and recommend it be presented to the Talbot County Council with a request for adoption. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. A vote was called. Mr. Horner attempted to amend the motion, but after debating the proper procedure, the motion stayed as presented. The motion passed, with only Mr. Horner voting nay. Mr. Horner clarified that while he supports the plan, he'd like confirmation that absent town representatives agree. Ms. Vanhooser affirmed that she would visit with each town representative, and while St. Michaels has not appointed a representative to the EDC, the county will re-visit with them as well.

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

For the sake of time, Ms. Vanhooser forewent her report, but she noted that the Whalen Company has sold to a group out of Canada. She is meeting with the company later today to learn additional details.

**VII. Town Reports and Open Comments**

Town representatives reported on news from their jurisdiction.

Ms. Ranson reported that several realtors are working with the Robert Morris Inn to assist in the sale. The price has been reduced. The Oxford Post Office is being restored. Guests Ms. Kratovil and Ms. Hastings noted that the offices of Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks are aware of the issues and are working with the Oxford Town Manager.

Representatives from Queen Anne, Trappe, and St. Michaels were not present.

**VIII. Open Comments**

Ms. Kratovil thanked Mr. Stamp for his recent assistance and congratulated Ms. Vanhooser on her recent award as Tourism Person of the Year.

Senators Van Hollen and Alsobrooks will open a joint portal for CVS in February/March timeframe. Those that have previously applied will automatically receive a notification when it opens.

Mr. Horner stated that deadlines are approaching for existing broadband grants. Easton Utilities is working to spread the word that free connections from curb to house are still available for those that qualify through the Connect Talbot initiative.

**IX. Officer Elections**

Ms. Vanhooser presented the future slate of officers. Ms. Walsworth has agreed to serve another year as chair, with Dr. Coppersmith agreeing to continue as Vice-Chair. With no further discussion or nominations from the floor, Ms. Wilson motioned for the slate of officers to be approved. Mr. Horner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**X. Final Remarks and Announcements for Upcoming Meetings**

- 2026 EDC Meeting Dates: March 5, June 4, September 3, December 3

**XI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:37 a.m.