

**Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, June 4, 2026

8 a.m.

Talbot County Free Library

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Dr. Cliff Coppersmith called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

Members Present: Ted Bautz, Al Bond, Dr. Clifford Coppersmith, John Horner, Ken Kozel, Dr. Michael Meier, Dr. Shannon Potter Dill, Barbara Ranson, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Terenda Thomas, Jackie Wilson Cassandra Vanhooser,

Members Absent: Deborah Walsworth, Chris Kleppinger, Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Sr., Dr. David Montgomery, Reza Jafari, Amy Kreiner Rob Straebel,

Guests: Liz Connelly, Kurt Fuchs, Kristy Morrell, Dana Newman, and Scott Warner,

Staff: Kristen Goller and Ryan Snow

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 5, 2026

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

commission. Ms. Vanhooser noted that the strategic plan (draft) includes several data points, so the two documents should be compared for consistency. After some discussion, a call was made to form a committee to review the chapter. Mr. Bautz, Mr. Jafari, Dr. Meier, and Dr. Montgomery volunteered to serve on the committee.

III. Talbot County Council Report – Clay Stamp

Mr. Stamp, who joined via Zoom, offered a council report as Mr. Callahan was unable to attend. Mr. Stamp recognized Ms. Vanhooser for her service to Talbot County and congratulated her on her new position as Managing Director for the Maryland Office of Tourism. Moving forward, the county is grateful to the County

Council for passing the Economic Development and Tourism strategic plan, as it provides a road map for the future.

IV. Director's Report – Cassandra M. Vanhooser

A fourth cohort of the Talbot Works Business Academy is complete, and a fifth cohort, funded by the Mid-Shore Regional Council, is planned for this winter. So far, the program has graduated 50 businesspeople. Moving forward, the county can evaluate whether to continue the program exclusively within Talbot County, or a partnership with neighboring counties can be explored, as they also offer similar programs.

Ms. Vanhooser shared that Mark C. Perna spoke to 1,700 people during his visit April 13-14, including all Talbot County high school students. The event demonstrated that there is opportunity to engage with the school system in a more meaningful way. Mr. Bautz suggested the commission consider how the school system can be invited to engage with the board, perhaps through an ex-officio position.

The previously discussed EDA application is still pending. Ms. Vanhooser is working with Easton Utilities and Mid-Shore Regional Council to provide additional information and revise the application as needed based on federal feedback.

Ms. Vanhooser thanked the commission for their work on the strategic plan, which was unanimously approved by council. She also thanked the commission for supporting the 2026 Business Appreciation Summit. This year's [Community Impact Award winners](#) included DHW Holdings, Inc., F3 Tech Biomanufacturing Facility and Accelerator, Talbot County Free Library, The Market at Dover Station, and Scott Warner. Speaker Dr. Dell Gines, chief innovation officer for the International Economic Development Council, focused on the future of economic development in an AI world. He defined economic development as, "leveraging the power of economics to create a place where people want to live, work, and play."

Ms. Vanhooser asked the commission to put the Mark Perna visit on their calendars for April 13-14, invitations are forthcoming. Please also hold May 14 for the Business Appreciation Summit with guest speaker Dell Gines, Chief Innovation Officer of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC).

V. Town Reports

Of those that were present, town representatives reported on news from their jurisdiction.

Dr. Meier reported for St. Michaels, highlighting the St. Michaels Community Center's new building. Their Music in the Park concert series is returning for the 2026 season. A seaplane business is coming to St. Michaels. The town needs a third water well. The nature trail expansion behind the Inn at Perry Cabin is still in progress.

Ms. Ranson reported that the Town of Oxford will now be equipped with a full-service ATM by Shore United. Repairs to the post office building are still underway. The Robert Morris Inn has been condemned and desperately needs a buyer if it is to be saved. The zoning would allow for it to continue as an inn, or it could be residential, or partially units with a business below. The cost per key is in the Ritz category, but the property doesn't currently warrant the price due to its condition. Talbot County Sheriff's office are policing the town at present.

VI. Open Comments

Critchlow Adkins, according to Ms. Morrell has been graded an Excels 5, making it the only qualified provider able to partner with the Talbot County Public School system. It is viewed as a model program for the state.

Ms. Newman invited all to attend this weekend's Children's Book Festival to kick off summer reading.

Mr. Horner announced that the Connect Talbot is ending. Talbot County is the first in Maryland to have full broadband access. Easton Utilities is working towards solutions to meet a growing demand for electricity, as demand is outpacing supply. A second solar rack is being explored near the airport property. Easton Utilities is not considering existing farmland for this use.

Mr. Kozel provided a construction update for the regional medical center. The final floors are being poured, with a goal to encapsulate by the end of 2026. The well fields are dug. Horizontal connections are progressing. The new intersection is on track to open this summer. The current hospital has been sold to Bluepoint Living.

Mr. Warner congratulated Ms. Vanhooser on her new role, noting how much work she's done behind the scenes during her tenure in Talbot County. Talbot County has now closed out all 14 of its projects.

Dr. Coppersmith informed the group that Chesapeake College's newest building is on track to open late 2028/29.

VII. Final Remarks and Announcements for Upcoming Meetings

- 2026 EDC Meeting Dates: September 3, December 3

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:31 a.m.