



**TALBOT COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**  
215 Bay Street, Suite #5 | EASTON, MARYLAND 21601 | (P) 410-770-8058 (F) 410-770-8059

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission Meeting**  
**Minutes from September 6, 2018**

**Members Present:** Chairman Al Silverstein, Vice Chairman Jackie Wilson, Ron Engle, Ted Bautz, Peter Dunbar, Tim Jones, Cassandra Vanhooser, , Margaret Enloe, Andy Hollis, Reza Jafari, Shannon Dill, , Mike Henry, Scott Beatty, Andrea Lev, Tim Jones, Jennifer Williams, Walter Chase, Jean Weisman

**Members Absent:**, Craig Wanner, Terenda Thomas, Gerald O'Mara

**Department of Economic Development Staff Present:** Sam Shoge, Kathy Megahan

**Attendees:** Dana Newman, Scott Warner, Nancy LaJoyce, Micah Risher, Melissa Kelly

**Call to Order:** Al Silverstein called the meeting to order with a quorum at 8:04 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the July 12, 2018 meeting were presented. Mr. Jafari moved the minutes be accepted as written. Mr. Bautz seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

**Guest Speaker Series, Talbot County Free Library:** David Fike, President, APG Media of Chesapeake

Mr. Fike introduced himself and gave a brief overview of APG Media of Chesapeake, which includes 17 newspapers, 5 magazines, 9 military base guides, 10 websites, 5 mobile apps, a 33 unit commercial web press and a sheet fed press. The Star Democrat is part of APG Media. Mr. Fike discussed the effects of tariffs on newsprint and aluminum, which caused an additional \$40,000.00 per month in expenses. He, along with other newspaper executives, worked with lawmakers to get the tariff on newsprint overturned, and they are now working on stopping the tariff on aluminum which is used on the printing presses. He said the papers decision to have only a digital version of The Star Democrat on Mondays probably won't change, explaining much of the content in the digital edition is only available online.

Mr. Fike touched on the fatal shootings at the Annapolis Capital newsroom which resulted in APG Media's decision to hold "active shooter response" training for the newspapers employees. He talked about the recent launch of a military magazine for veterans called "At Ease" and the first anniversary of "Shore Monthly" magazine that highlights the Eastern Shore.



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He added the paper's number one challenge is hiring, which centers around two areas: entry level positions and sales.

Mr. Fike described new areas of revenue with the launch of NXC Media in March of 2017, which aims to connect advertisers in primarily digital markets, and the launch of the two new magazines. APG Media is family owned and committed to small town newspapers.

Ms. Wilson thanked Mr. Fike and The Star Democrat for all their continued community involvement. Ms. Vanhooser asked Mr. Fike how he projects the future of newspapers. Mr. Fike said the emphasis in small communities is still the traditional fashion, he feels it is important not to move too fast to the digital environment.

#### **Workforce Development Update:** Reza Jafari/Sam Shoge

Mr. Jafari and Mr. Shoge introduced the establishment, through The Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, of a Workforce Development Taskforce. Mr. Jafari opened by stating that workforce development is the core element of Economic Development. Workforce development is not just a local issue but a national issue that must have a private and public partnership. Mr. Shoge gave a quick recap of the discussion during the July EDC meeting regarding the amount of labor shortage and job openings in Talbot County. Mr. Shoge thanked Mr. Silverstein and the Chamber of Commerce for bringing this initiative forward and creating the Workforce Development Taskforce. He noted this is a main focus of the Economic Development Department's Strategic Plan and a primary goal of the department. This taskforce is the first step in moving that initiative forward.

Mr. Jafari added the job skills required for the current labor market are rapidly changing. He said the purpose of the taskforce is to create an Eco-System of organizations/entities who are committed to serve the workforce development needs/initiatives of Talbot County and to share the benefits through collaborative engagements, resource sharing and Public /Private Partnerships. Mr. Jafari said the next step for the Taskforce is to decide what are the expectations of its members, identify potential members, how often will they meet, and how will they communicate. One expectation from the taskforce would be assessment of workforce supply and demand for the business community, non-profits and public sectors. Mr Jafari pointed out there are over 450 non-profits in Talbot County. He feels there is the need for the creation of a marketplace exchange portal for job seekers through the posting of available opportunities including internships, mentoring, start ups, and incubation. Mr. Silverstein added the taskforce should encompass a wide circle of people whose goal is to grow the community and make sure our businesses can function properly and be successful. Mr. Shoge stated he looks forward to the formal process and noted the importance of local businesses posting internships and job openings online and participating in career job fairs.



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#### **Director's Report:** Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser reminded the members Next Step 190 will be coming up for a vote before the County Council on September 11. She reported the Mistletoe Farm project received a grant from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund for \$250,000.00 to help with infra-structure development. She thanked Scott Warner for his help in applying for the grant. Ms. Vanhooser introduced Nancy LaJoyce, the new MD Commerce Dept. representative and Mike Henry, who is retiring, introduced Micah Risher, who is replacing him as the new airport manager.

#### **Chairman's Report:** Alan Silverstein

Mr. Silverstein inquired as to the member's interest in taking a trip to Poplar Island. Contact Sam Shoge if interested in planning a fall trip

#### **County Council Report:** Jennifer Williams

Ms. Williams reported on County Councils interest in expanding the Enterprise Zone in Easton. The council also has approved a preliminary engineering study to look at the possibility of bringing some type of sewer plant to the Ferry Point area in Trappe. She reminded members the issue of raising the tax cap will be on the ballot in November and the Council needs their support. The primary purpose for the increase is to respond to Emergency Services being stretched thin. She explained part of the reason for the rewrite of the Zoning Code, which is coming up for vote, is to bring the Zoning Code up-to-date with state and federal regulations as well as to make the code more user friendly.

#### **Member Updates:**

Scott Warner – reported that the Maryland Broadband Cooperative has brought cable under the Chesapeake Bay between Calvert County and Dorchester County to provide redundant internet service to the shore.

Jean Weisman – St. Michaels accommodation tax is up 90% for the fiscal year from last year. Construction on the Acme building is ready to begin.



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Tim Jones - The fall semester at Chesapeake College has started. Enrollment is slightly down. This may be due to the bill giving residents the ability, starting next year, for free community college in Maryland. A main focus of the college this year is on career technology education.

Peter Dunbar –Two new restaurants in Oxford, Capsize and Doc’s Sunset Grille are proving to be successful. Oxford has received a grant for \$90,000.00 from DNR for shoreline resilience and another grant for \$175,000.00 toward redevelopment of The Mews.

Dana Newman – The library has added some financial literacy classes, partnering with Shore United Bank, and workforce development classes, which include the Microsoft Office programs. Frederick Douglas Day is on September 22, several activities are planned at the library. Friends Book Sale is scheduled for October 12 and 13.

Ted Bautz – Update on Opportunity Zone in Easton – waiting to receive Opportunity Fund guidelines from the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury.

Margaret Enloe – Article in Chesapeake Bay Magazine on Harris Creek restoration. After 5 years the restored oyster bed is filtering the creek every 10 days. Preparations for this year’s Waterfowl Festival are underway.

Shannon Dill – Talbot County Fair was very successful. Harvest for the local farmers is underway.

Al Silverstein – The Chambers MEPE Program this year added Dorchester teachers. The program now includes teachers from Talbot, Queen Anne, Caroline and Dorchester. This gets the CTE teachers out in the communities to learn about companies and job opportunities in the area.

**Adjournment:** With business concluded Mr. Chase moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Jafari. The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

Next meeting will be Thursday, October 4 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)