



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 October 3, 2019

Members Present: Chairman, Jackie Wilson, Vice Chairman, Reza Jafari Ron Engle, Cassandra Vanhooser, Ted Bautz, Al Silverstein, Margaret Enloe, Micah Risher, Andy Hollis, Craig Wanner, Walter Chase

Members Absent: Chuck Callahan, Terenda Thomas, Gordon Fronk, Donna Saathoff, Andrea Lev, Jean Weisman, Scott Beatty, Tim Jones, Shannon Dill

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

Attendees: Dana Newman, Cristy Morrell, Scott Warner, Nancy LaJoice, Mike Arntz, Patty Shreves, Tracy Ward, Matthew Peters

Call to Order: Jackie Wilson called the meeting to order with a quorum at 8:01 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the September 5, 2019 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: Matthew Peters, Executive Director, Chesapeake Multicultural Center

Mr. Peters opened his presentation by describing his background in the Peace Corps after college when he was stationed in Guatemala. He lived and worked in Guatemala until 2012. He stated in late 2012 several local community leaders were interested in starting a resource center to connect the Easton community with the immigrant community. Mr. Peters said he was brought on in late 2012 to start the Chesapeake Multicultural Center. The primary focus of the Center is to help Limited English Proficient individuals to successfully integrate into the community. Mr. Peters said the first step he made as director was to start an after-school program at Easton Elementary School. This program provides a Community Learning Center for grades one through five and now serves over 125 children a day. He stated the first program has expanded now to include Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, English as a Second Language classes for adults, citizenship classes, driver's license assistance, and immigration legal assistance. Chesapeake Multicultural Center now serves residents not only in Talbot County, but also in Caroline, Dorchester, and Queen Anne's County.



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Mr. Peters noted, although they have received some state and community grants, they are primarily funded by private donations. Approximately 90% of their funding comes from four major donors. They have recently been able to buy property on Dover Street in Easton to be closes to their community. Mr. Peters invited all the EDC members to the ribbon cutting of the new location on Friday, October 11. Chesapeake Multicultural Center became a Department of Justice accredited organization in 2016, which means they can assist in all immigration cases without the need for a lawyer. They also are a Certified Application Counselor Organization to directly help families with Medicaid and other health plans. This saves families thousands of dollars by not having to hire lawyers and/or travel to Baltimore or Washington, DC. Mr. Peters said they are seeing the gap close as more immigration resources are available here in Easton.

Mr. Peters pointed out they work with over 50 nationalities with the largest percentage from Central America. Currently, over 40% of Easton Elementary School student body is Hispanic and in five years, one in three graduates will be recent immigrants. He stressed this will create a diverse workforce dedicated to their families that will remain in Easton. He said he sees many Hispanics looking into entrepreneurial endeavors that come to ChesMRC for help.

The biggest issue facing the population ChesMRC serves is documentation. With the 2020 United States Census coming up, Mr. Peters sees many of his clientele afraid to give out personal information. Many of his families told him; when they see the census, they just throw it away. He stated he encourages them to come to the Center when they receive the census and his staff will walk them through it. Mr. Silverstein added that without an accurate census count it could affect how federal money is dispersed in the community because federal dollars are tied to an areas population.

Mr. Peters touched on another area of concern, the lack of affordable housing in Talbot County, which forces families to live far from their place of employment or forces several families to live together in apartments or small houses. He said families want and need to get their own place, but do not have the income for a larger place.

Department Report: Sam Shoge

Mr. Shoge began his report with some good news about the Department of Economic Developments' Resource Fair, which was held on September 18. There were over 40 attendees. This was a good opportunity to let the business community and local business leaders educate themselves about the various programs, incentives, and financing tools that have recently launched in Talbot County. These include; the Enterprise Zone Program, the Opportunity Zone Program, Maryland Commercial PACE Program, and the Arts and Entertainment District in Easton.



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Mr. Shoge reported he and Ms. Vanhooser attended the Governors Business Summit in Baltimore. The overall theme of the summit was “Building Your Workforce for Tomorrow.” Mr. Jafari and Mr. Bautz also attended and both felt there was little representation from the Eastern Shore. In addition, Mr. Shoge pointed out that Mr. Wanner and The Whalen Company will be representing the State of Maryland at a National Policy Academy on “How to Improve Manufacturing across the United States.” He reported Konsyl Pharmaceuticals has recently transitioned from manufacturing to sales and marketing at their Easton location and had a lot of scientific and laboratory equipment that was no longer needed which they donated to the Talbot County Public Schools and their science programs.

Director’s Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Ms. Vanhooser reported the Economic and Development Department is hosting the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) meeting on October 20 and 21. The topic for this fall conference is “Defining Your Community’s Identity.” Ms. Vanhooser said they will be having Mike Thielke, from F3 Tech, giving a session on innovations in agriculture. She noted this event will launch Maryland Economic Development Week and Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Commerce, Ben Wu, will be here to read the Governor’s Citation to launch Economic Development week.

Department of Commerce Report: Nancy LaJoice

Ms. LaJoice introduced a new resource offered by the Maryland Department of Commerce. She stated it’s a website targeted toward defense contractors, cybersecurity businesses, as well as manufacturers that do business with those entities. The website is Maryland Defense Network.org and it is designed to give users an opportunity to make meaningful connections, understand government contract opportunities, find business prospects, and stay informed of developments in the industry. The manufacturing directory is a place where manufacturers can list their business for free. It also includes government contract notices so a business can forecast what opportunities are coming up and determine what they want to bid on.

Chairman’s Report: Jackie Wilson

No Report

County Council Report: Chuck Callahan

No Report



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Town Reports

Town of Easton – Ron Engle

Mr. Engle pointed out that at the Easton Utilities Annual Meeting, it was announced there have been sightings of United States Department of Agriculture vehicles throughout the county checking areas for broadband expansion. He also brought to the members attention the complete demolition of the former J.C. Penney's store, preparing the area for renovation and new stores to the Easton Marketplace shopping center to include Marshalls, Ulta Beauty, and Five Below as well as the totally rebuilt McDonalds.

Town of St. Michaels – Jean Weisman

No Report

Town of Oxford – Gordon Fronk

No Report

Town of Trappe – Walter Chase

Mr. Chase reported on the opening of two new restaurants in Trappe, The Coffee Trappe and Mama Maria's. He also noted renovations have been completed on the Moore Building and the Lakeside Development off Route 50 continues to move forward.

Town of Queen Anne

No Report

Adjournment: With business, concluded Mr. Bautz moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Jafari. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Next meeting will be Thursday, November 7, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at 100 W. Dover Street (TCFL)