

**Economic Development Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 7, 2021**  
Via Zoom

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

Vice Chairperson, Reza Jafari called the meeting to order at approximately 8 a.m.

**Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Ted Bautz, Chuck Callahan, Walter Chase, Cliff Coppersmith, Shannon Dill, Ron Engle, Margaret Enloe, Dave Harper, Reza Jafari, Amy Kreiner, Sandi Pepe, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Cassandra Vanhooser, Debbie Walsworth, Craig Wanner, Scott Warner, Jean Weisman, and Jackie Wilson.

**Board Members Absent:** Micah Risher, Donna Saathoff, Terenda Thomas, and Jackie Wilson.

**Staff Present:** Pam Keeton.

**Guests:** Susie Hayward, Melissa Kelly, Kimberly Kratovil, Nancy LaJoice, Cristy Morrell, Daniel North, and Tracy Ward.

**II. Guest Speaker:** Daniel North, Senior Economist, Euler Hermes North America gave a presentation on the state of the U.S. and global economies, COVID-19, and projections for the future. Highlights include:

- Rapid job destruction in 2020.
- Unemployment seven times historical average.
- Job creation and personal income slowed each month in 2020.
- 62% of the travel and tourism industry and 61% of gyms and fitness businesses permanently closed in 2020.
- COVID-19 vaccinations need to be focused on people ages 62+.
- Leading economic indicators are strong for recovery.
- Recovery estimated to be in 2023.

**III. Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the December 3, 2020, meeting were presented. Ted Bautz moved the minutes be accepted as written. Walter Chase seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**IV. County Council Report:** Chuck Callahan introduced new County Manager, Clay Stamp and gave an update on COVID-19 immunizations.

Clay Stamp thanked Mr. Callahan and said he is looking forward to working with the EDC. He recognized the passion and commitment of the business community and

restated his belief that economic stability is one of the pillars of a strong, resilient Talbot County.

- V. **Chairman's Report:** Ms. Vanhooser took control of the meeting briefly to handle the election of the new chairman. Reza Jafari was nominated and all members voted in favor. Mr. Jafari thanked the members and stated that the EDC will be available as a think tank to the County Council to give insights and advice.

Mr. Jafari stepped into the role of chairman and nominated Margaret Enloe to be vice chairman. The nomination received unanimous approval. Mr. Jafari stated he is looking forward to working with Ms. Enloe and the EDC.

- VI. **Director's Report:** Ms. Vanhooser said she is looking forward to working with Mr. Jafari, Ms. Enloe, and Mr. Stamp. She then continued with her report, says that 2020 was a race to the finish line in the month of December.

**Talbot CARES Small Business Grant:** The department opened a fourth round of Talbot CARES Small Business Grants on November 30 and vowed to take applications until December 11. In those two weeks, we received 59 grant applications. Of those applicants, we funded 28, with just less than \$2,000 left that will be deployed to one. A number of the final round did not qualify as they were unable to show a 25% loss of revenue, and 11 that qualified were not funded.

Since June 2020, Talbot County has dispersed \$1.45 million in CARES grant funds to 169 businesses. Ms. Vanhooser will make a final report to the County Council on February 9.

**State Restaurant and Hotel/Motel Grants:** In January, the department will gear up for another round of state grants. Talbot County signed their grant agreement this week for another \$318,810 for restaurants, and the grants task force will be finalizing the details of that grant program early next week. Talbot County has already distributed \$531,350 to 81 restaurants and food businesses in Talbot County.

On Wednesday, January 6, the county received its grant agreement for the hotel / motel grant program for a total of \$534,480. This dollar amount was based on a formula that calculated a percentage of the accommodation tax amount collected in the county and the sales and use taxes collected in this category. The funds come with more restrictions than the restaurant money. Each jurisdiction can distribute as they see fit, but the lodging establishment must show a 25% loss in revenue from April through November 2020 and they must agree to reopen by March of 2021. Talbot County's finance team and grants task force will both be meeting to hammer out the guidelines for distribution, late this week and early next week.

**Talbot County Economic Development & Tourism Emergency Grant:** Also in December, the department received a surprise offer from an anonymous donor to make a

donation of \$45,000 to help small business. This person had read about what we were doing, and they needed to make a year-end donation. Ms. Vanhooser presented the idea to the County Council, and they voted to allow us to enter into an agreement with the Mid-Shore Community Foundation. The legal team of both entities worked out an agreement, signed it, and paved the way for the donation to be made the last week of December. Ms. Vanhooser is particularly excited about this grant program because there are some really small businesses that just have not been able to get help. The department will be doing a roll out in January for this grant program and should be able to quickly put some of this money to good use.

**Tilghman Island Enterprise Zone Update:** Finally, also in December, Ms. Vanhooser was able to get the Tilghman Island Inn certified to receive tax credits as part of the Tilghman Island Enterprise Zone. The department has worked with this business since their purchase of the property, and they reopened the hotel and restaurant in 2020. Businesses such as the Tilghman Island Inn that opened in 2020 have not qualified for any of the federal aid and none of the grants programs except our restaurant grant because they opened in the middle of the pandemic. This is the third business on Tilghman Island that has been certified to receive tax credits.

- VII. Maryland Department of Commerce:** No report.
- VIII. Town Reports:** Town representatives gave reports on happenings in and around their jurisdictions.
- IX. Comments from Board Members and Guests:** Other members of the EDC and guests reported on their activities.
- IX. Next Meeting:** February 4, 2021, at 8 a.m.
- X. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.