

**Economic Development Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, September 1, 2022

8 a.m.

Via Zoom

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

Chairman Reza Jafari called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**Members Present:** Ted Bautz, Chuck Callahan, Clifford Coppersmith, Shannon Potter Dill, Ron Engle, Reza Jafari, Ken Kozel, Amy Kreiner, Micah Risher, Clay Stamp, Cassandra Vanhooser, Jackie Wilson, and Debbie Walsworth

**Members Absent:** Jimmy Jaramillo, Donna Saathoff, and Terenda Thomas

**Staff Present:** Krista Boothby

**Guests:** Holly DeKarske, Frank Divilio, Helga Einhorn, Susie Hayward, Nancy LaJoice, Dana Newman, Sharon Pepukayi, Kelly Simonsen, Kimberly Kratovil, Natalie Slater

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Bautz made a motion to accept the minutes from the June 16, 2022, meeting as written. Mr. Kozel seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**III. Welcome and Introduction of Guest Speaker**

Mr. Jafari introduced Dr. Sharon Pepukayi, the new superintendent of Talbot County Public Schools. Born and raised in the Bellevue community, Dr. Pepukayi graduated from St. Michaels High School and spent the next 30 years educating young people in Ohio and Delaware. She has a strong vision for success and a call to action for the business community.

The business community can – and should – be an important partner with the school system as college and career readiness are pillars of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. School administrators will be seeking feedback from businesses on the impact of their work. Business owners can become part of the instructional pathway for some students. Mentoring, internships, and apprenticeships can and should be part of the mix.

**IV. Chuck Callahan, President, Talbot County Council**

Mr. Callahan reported on significant County projects, including the new Sheriff's Office and new Health Department.

**V. Frank Divilio, Talbot County Council**

Mr. Divilio is not running for reelection, and he asked to attend to thank the EDC for their service to the Council. He expressed special thanks to the EDC committee members who worked on the Rural Economic Development Fund application review process.

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

**Update on Rural Economic Development Fund** – Ms. Vanhooser asked Reza Jafari and Scott Warner to report on the grants process. Mr. Jafari thanked the committee of EDC members who reviewed the applications and participated in the review process. He noted that the committee made recommendations to the County Council at their Aug. 9 regular meeting. They accepted some of the recommendations, but not others.

A special Council meeting was called on Aug. 11 to finalize Talbot County's recommendations to the Mid-Shore Regional Council. Mr. Warner laid out the remainder of the process. The Mid-Shore submitted 28 projects to the Maryland Department of Commerce; 14 of those projects belonged to Talbot County. The list of recommended projects is as follows:

- **Chesapeake College**, Future Work Workforce Training, \$257,500
- **Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Inc.**, Mid-Shore Optical Broadband Network Upgrade, \$240,000
- **Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center**, Ag Biotech Manufacturing Project, \$500,000
- **Town of Trappe**, Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade to ENR Technology, \$500,000
- **Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Inc.**, New Welcome Center, \$300,000
- **Talbot County Free Library**, Digital Literacy and Employment Skills, \$22,000
- **Building African American Minds**, Workforce Development Program, \$87,133
- **Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism**, Inclusive Ventures Program, \$50,000
- **Talbot County Parks and Recreation**, Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe Phase II, \$300,000
- **Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism**, Strategic Plan, \$125,000

- **Talbot County Public Works**, Goldsborough Neck Road Culvert Replacement Project, \$750,000
- **Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism**, Visitors Center Feasibility Study, \$38,700
- **Oxford Community Center**, The Work Hub, \$13,000
- **Classic Motor Museum of St. Michaels, Inc.**, Automotive Technician Apprenticeship Program, \$50,000

**Talbot County’s Rural Economic Development Projects:** A total of five Talbot County government projects will receive grants from the \$3.2 million fund. Projects that directly involved the department include: 1) Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan, 2) Inclusive Ventures Program, 3) Feasibility Study for Visitors Center, and 4) Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe. The fifth Talbot County project is an investment in the construction of Goldsborough Neck Road. Ms. Vanhooser noted that EDC involvement will be critical to the success of these programs. Members will be invited to serve on at least one committee.

**Fall Events** – Ms. Vanhooser asked EDC members and guests to mark their calendars for several fall events related to the department’s activities. She noted that Economic Development Week will take place Oct. 24-28, and the department will again host its Coffee and Conservation event on Friday, Nov. 11 at 8:30 a.m.

**Proposed “Let’s Talk Business” Speaker Series** – Ms. Vanhooser is working to establish a winter speaker series.

**Officer Elections** – Ms. Vanhooser reported that officer elections will be held at the Dec. 1 meeting. Mr. Kozel is the nominee for chairman, and Debbie Walsworth is the nominee for vice-chairman. Other interested parties should contact Ms. Vanhooser or Mr. Jafari as soon as possible.

**Bylaws Review and Update** – Mr. Jafari and Ms. Vanhooser are reviewing the EDC bylaws and will submit suggested updates to the County Attorney for review. Updating the bylaws is a legislative process. Recommendations will be made to the new County Council after the first of the year.

**Open EDC Position:** Craig Wanner’s position on the EDC has expired, and he has chosen not to be reappointed. Please let Ms. Vanhooser or Mr. Jafari know if you wish to nominate someone to fill the open position. The EDC recommends candidates to the Council for appointment.

## **VII. Town Reports**

Mr. Jafari announced that the Town of St. Michaels has appointed Town Manager Rob Straebel to represent their interests on the Economic Development Commission. Other town representatives reported on information in their jurisdictions.

#### **VIII. Comments from Board Members and Guests**

Board members reported on upcoming events and initiatives related to their businesses.

#### **IX. Maryland Department of Commerce**

Ms. Nancy LaJoice reported that the Maryland Department of Commerce has launched a one million dollar manufacturing grant for businesses with less than 150 employees to update or expand their robotics capabilities. There will be a webinar about the grant on Wednesday, Sept. 7.

#### **X. Upcoming Meetings**

- Sept. 18-21 – IEDC Annual Convention, Oklahoma City
- Oct. 24-28 – Economic Development Week
- Nov. 11 – Coffee and Conservation at the Waterfowl Festival
- Dec. 1 – Quarterly EDC Meeting

#### **XI. Adjournment**

Ms. Kreiner made the motion to adjourn; Mr. Bautz seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.