

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES**

September 3, 2009

PRESENT: Joyce Bowlsbey, Paula Gilley, Raymond Hamm, Mayor Frank Hill, Commissioner Robert Hodge (Ex-Officio), Dr. Ken Lewis (Chair), Laura Mayse (Chamber), Dr. Stephen Pannill, Mike Ratchford, Tim Smith.
Staff: Roy Clough, Debbie Graham, Joanne Richart-Young, Vernon Thompson, Sandy Turner.

ABSENT: Mayor Kerry Abrams, Mayor John Bunnell, Mayor Judy Cox, John Dillman, Mayor Jim Eberhardt, Harland Graef, John Denver, Mayor Joe Fisona, Norman Gaither, Sally Goswell, Robert McKnight, Grove Miller, Dr. Carl Roberts, Rupert Rossetti, Gary Stewart, Donna Tapley, and Steve Vandervort.

GUESTS: Bruce England, Dr. Robert Gell, Cheryl Mattix, and Bruce Yerkes.

Call to Order & Welcome

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

Approval of Minutes

The May 5, 2009 minutes were approved as e-mailed.

Director s Report

The Office of Economic Development gave a brief on "Capital for a Day". Director Thompson reported that in the morning, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), and the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) toured Rt. 222 and I-95, as well as The Lighthouse Property for Video Lottery Terminals. The group was briefed by Wes Guckert of The Traffic Group on the analysis of the interchange and the upgrades that are necessary. Gary Stewart of Stewart Associates also spoke on what they are planning to do with the remaining 104 acres of the property, which they plan to make an entertainment destination. The group then toured Bainbridge and discussed the wastewater line and environmental issues.

The Cabinet met at Fairwinds Farms for their meeting. The governor left the meeting and went to the Vo Tech school for lunch. After that, the Chamber Presidents met with the governor in North East.

Sandy Turner advised that she took the Secretary of Natural Resources, Assistant Secretary of DBED, DBED Tourism Director and a few members of the Governor's staff to the Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area.

Roy Clough advised that he met with the Secretary of Minority Affairs. Secretary Jenkins explained what was available in the State for small businesses. Later in the afternoon, he met with the Deputy Secretary of Housing. They discussed the housing issues in the County in relation to BRAC, as well as the situation at Indian Acres in Earleville and Lakeside Manufactured Home Park in North East. They also discussed the need for sewage at Bainbridge. They also talked about block grants and the revolving loan fund.

Dr. Pannill advised that Cecil College hosted the Department of Higher Education. The Secretary recognized their participation in the Sister States Program.

Dr. Lewis advised that the Secretary of Health and Hygiene visited Union Hospital.

Discussion ensued concerning the EDC following up on the governor and his cabinet's visit. Director Thompson stated that the EDC could put together a letter for the governor that highlights the critical issues of economic development.

Bruce England advised that Tom Perez visited the Susquehanna Workforce Network. Funding prospects are not looking good. The allocations for this region have been reduced significantly. They did receive \$900,000 in stimulus funding this year. The problem is Cecil County has no areas of substantial unemployment. The funding for the Ft. Monmouth Resource Center expires in September. It is currently funded by the federal government and there is no commitment from the State that they will sponsor it if the federal government does not.

Chairman Lewis suggested something be drafted that touches on the highlights of things that are relevant to the EDC, circulate it to the group via e-mail so the committee can make suggestions of other points they want to highlight.

Commissioner Hodge advised that he had lunch with MDP, MDE, and MDOT. It's good for the state representatives to come here and actually see the projects.

Comprehensive Plan

Commissioner Hodge reported that he was asked to resign from the Comprehensive Plan Committee because of potential conflict of interest about voting as a member and as a County Commissioner. The economic development aspect of the Plan is good.

The growth area is pretty much the same as the old Plan. The only difference in the new Plan and the old Plan is there will be a few more zoning districts and more mixed-use type zoning. A rough draft of the Plan will be on the County's website approximately 9/8/09. The Comprehensive Plan Committee will be meeting twice in September to go over the rough draft. They will make changes and deliver the final draft to the Planning Commission in October and will simultaneously submit to MDP for their review and recommendations. Planning Commission public hearings will be held in late December or January. If the EDC has any concerns, they should address them at the Planning Commission level because it will be easier to make changes at that level as opposed to the Commissioner level. Commissioner Hodge doesn't think the Commissioners will want to make major changes to a document that has been prepared by 40 citizens over a two-year period, and also approved by the Planning Commission. The Commissioners will review the Plan in February 2010 and more public meetings will be held.

Director Thompson advised that the Economic Development Office has been in contact with the consultant, ERM, and has provided written comments concerning the septic requirements and the 1,000 feet from the stream. The office also feels that employment centers should be set aside in areas outside of the growth corridor. Ms. Gilley advised that the old map didn't show specific employment centers, therefore, they didn't feel that the new map needed to show them. Once the Plan is adopted, a Comprehensive Rezoning will take place and at that point, zonings will be designated that will allow those types of centers.

Commissioner Hodge stated that 200+/- people attended a public hearing on a very rough draft. Approximately 20 people spoke and about 50 people submitted written comments after the meeting. Unfortunately, the Comprehensive Plan Committee did not implement any of the ideas or suggestions, which is disappointing from a public perspective. He feels that the Committee is split into two fractions and they can't seem to work out little issues any more. They have basically put the burden back on the consultant to incorporate any legitimate concerns into the rough draft.

Ms. Gilley advised that half the group doesn't think that 50,000 people should be allowed to come to Cecil County by 2030, and the other half feels that the population increased by 50,000 over the course of the last Comprehensive Plan, so that is acceptable. She advised that the density in the growth area has increased and the density in the north and south will remain the same.

Discussion ensued concerning infrastructure and the growth area. Commissioner Hodge stated that the Commissioners are concerned with two initiatives: 1) Elkton West project, and 2) Port Deposit wastewater pipeline.

Chick Hamm stated that the Plan deals with what is in the County but does not address economic opportunity from a perspective of somebody who is thinking about bringing jobs here. The process needs to be overlaid with the towns' process so potential

companies do not have to sort through everything associated with both County and municipalities.

Brief on meeting with Chamber of Commerce Board

Chairman Lewis advised that several members met with the Chamber of Commerce earlier this summer to talk about current issues. The group feels that there is a logical connection between the EDC and the Chamber. They feel the Chamber and EDC could collaborate by providing forums for discussion and sharing of information. Director Thompson advised that collaboration between the EDC and the County Chamber would be the way to get information out to the public and help clarify issues. Laura Mayse stated that it becomes an opportunity to say “here are the facts, now you decide”. Joining the two organizations together provides that vehicle without it having a political feel.

Joyce Bowsbey stated that there was a level of frustration at their meeting with the Chamber. It’s not a valuable use of the EDC members’ time to come to a meeting and listen to reports. It’s good information, but the Commission should be more active.

Future Direction of EDC

Commissioner Hodge stated that the County Commissioners need suggestions on how they can implement the County Plans. They need help with ideas and suggestions on how to implement the solutions that are spelled out in the Plans and Studies. The immediate direction of the EDC is they need to be a lot more political than they have been. They need to organize and act on issues that are important to the economic growth of the County.

After discussion about the future direction of the EDC, it was decided that all members should submit a scope of work priority list for the EDC to Ms. Graham via e-mail.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m. Next meeting will be Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. in the Perryville Meeting Room at the County Administration Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah J. Graham
Administrative Assistant