



## Economic & Tourism Development Commission

**October 9, 2024**

**Commission Members Present:** Paula Reeder, Sandy Scott, Judy Gifford, David Bowman, Judy Crow and Charlie Athey.

**Commission Member Absent:** Dick Story.

**Also in Attendance:** Jamie Williams, Director, Katie Abbott, Economic Development Manager, Shalyn Boulden, Tourism Manager, and Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development; and Shelley Heller, County Administrator.

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Athey called the meeting to order. Mr. Athey requested a motion to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2024, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Ms. Reeder, the September 11, 2024, minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Athey shared that the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Initiative is going well. All business profiles have been completed and there will be ten initial businesses visited. There has been great feedback and best practices to use going forward. Mr. Athey added that the BRE Initiative will help the Commission to meet some of the goals in the Strategic Plan.

Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing and Zoning, advised that the revised Land Use Ordinance and Zoning Map have been adopted, but are now with the Critical Area Commission for review. Once they are approved, they will go through a second legislative process to re-adopt the ordinance and zoning map with the Critical Area Commission recommendations. Mr. Mackey advised that he anticipated this process to be completed by the first of the year. Mr. Mackey shared an update on commercial projects and noted that this information can be found on the Kent County website [Planning, Housing and Zoning's, Public Postings](#) webpage.

Tom Mogle, Manager, Town of Betterton, shared that the Town of Betterton has just finished their comprehensive plan and identified the need to focus on growth and development. They would like to develop a Main Street community to enable them to apply for grant funding for projects and to improve properties. The Town is looking at sustainable tourism. The Town considered purchasing a 30-acre lot behind the firehouse to use a portion as a solar field to power their wastewater treatment plant, to save money, and to make use of renewable energy. The Town was not successful in obtaining the necessary funding and the property was sold to a solar company that plans to utilize 18 acres of the property for solar.

Mr. Mogle shared the Town's excitement to be on the list for consideration as a ferry stop and said that the Town would focus on tourism for those who want to appreciate a quieter lifestyle at the beach, walk around town, and other natural resources experiences rather than development. He added that the Town would be greatly impacted economically as a ferry stop. Mr. Mogle advised that the Town has had

conversations with Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, about the ferry feasibility study in having engineers look at the condition of the current pier in Betterton. The Town's sustainability committee has met to discuss the request for providing basic amenities such as renting umbrellas, towels, chairs, etc. Being a ferry stop would require improvements along the beach and waterfront. Mr. Mogle noted that the County has approved \$20,000 for an engineering study to examine the pier.

The population of Betterton has decreased from 476 in 2000 to 287 currently. Mr. Mogel noted that families are moving to areas where jobs are more readily available, and the homes are being bought as second homes and used as vacation rental properties. The Town is re-developing Ericcson Avenue, looking at the aging infrastructure and stormwater management of that area.

Ms. Williams gave an update on the passenger ferry project, noting that there is a webinar kick-off meeting scheduled for the end of October. Staff is working on organizing teams that will be attending the webinar and workshop to be held in Annapolis in January. The Delmarva Community Transit Training is scheduled for October 15, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Department of Public Works. This training is for community members or organizations that work with community members who need public transportation. The Kent County Commissioners signed a Proclamation for Economic Development Week which runs from October 21 through 25, 2024. Mr. Tom Porter will be at the County Commissioners' October 22, 2024, meeting to discuss CTE programs at Kent County High School. The Department of Economic and Tourism Development is working with Brett King at Kent County High School on internships for the second semester with local businesses.

Attempts have been made to collaborate on advertisement opportunities. One opportunity had three business respond and the other is still waiting for replies. The Department is continuing to push out opportunities to create a greater "Kent County" presence. Its Masala Time and Starbucks have opened and are busy. Ms. Williams shared 65%, 117 of the properties identified as short-term rentals are complying and have created their accounts. Efforts continue with the Office of Finance and the Department of Economic and Tourism Development in identifying additional properties and advertising platforms for renting the properties. At the November meeting, John Hickman, Director, BEACON, is scheduled to discuss the business sentiment survey results, and Erin Silva, Project Manager, Eastern Shore GIS Cooperative, will discuss the Delmarva Index and the data available.

Mr. Divilio shared that the Kent County Public Schools have launched their series of public communications that will start next week at Galena Elementary School at 6:00 p.m. There are meetings scheduled for each of the school buildings and some additional outside locations.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Reeder, seconded by Ms. Crow, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:58 p.m. The Commission agreed to meet again on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD  
Director