

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission (EDC) Meeting**  
**Talbot County Government Building, 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Easton MD 21601**  
**September 1, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Chairman, Timothy G. Jones; Vice Chairman, Al Silverstein; Jean Weisman; Gerald O'Mara, Jacqueline Wilson; Ron Engle, Craig Wanner, Ted Bautz and Scott Beatty

**Ex Officio Members Present:** R. Andrew Hollis, Mike Henry, Terenda Thomas and Cassandra Vanhooser

**Members Excused:** Andrea Lev

**Attendees:** Jeremy Rothwell, Jennifer Shull, Scott Warner, Kelly Simonsen, Cheryl Lewis (for Peter Dunbar) and Tracy Ward

**Call to Order:** Chairman Jones called the meeting to order, with a quorum, at 8:00 a.m.

**Approval of September Agenda and July Meeting Minutes:** Chairman Jones motioned to approve the September agenda; Ted Bautz seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Jones asked for a motion to approve the July meeting minutes; Vice Chairman Silverstein made a motion to approve the September meeting minutes as presented; Ron Engle seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**Business Environment Committee (BEC):** Mr. Bautz reported the Business Environment Committee would meet on September 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. William Stagg from Lane Engineering, LLC has expressed interest in joining, Mike Hiner has recommitted to join, as well as Scott Beatty. Andy Hollis, County Manager, expressed interest in attending the meeting.

**Communications Committee (CC):** Ms. Vanhooser reported that the press release regarding Andrea Lev and Craig Wanner's appointment to the EDC, which had been submitted to the Star Democrat, has not been published because Bob Zimberoff left the office in Talbot County and moved to the Dorchester County paper. Richard Polk has replaced Mr. Zimberoff's position at The Star Democrat. Ms. Vanhooser will request a meeting with Mr. Polk to develop a working relationship. The CC discussed the economic development report that is in progress. After meeting with Andy Hollis and Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager, Ms. Vanhooser reviewed the editorial outline and overall vision of the report with Joanne Shipley, the graphic designer. Plans for Economic Development Week were reviewed and the consensus was to recommend to the EDC that the event be postponed until the new Coordinator is appointed to the Office of Economic Development. The EDC conceded to postpone Economic Development Week until next year.

**Correspondence:** The OED received a request for a letter of support for the Certificate of Need application for the University of Maryland Shore Medical Center in Easton. The County Council has already sent a letter of support.

**Action Items:** The Tee Off for Talbot Golf Tournament Subcommittee has been dissolved. Ms. Vanhooser reported the Tourism Board voted to postpone the Golf Tournament until next year due to the focus on the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA) Annual Media Marketplace scheduled for September 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>.

**Strategic Plan Committee (SPC):** Chairman Jones reported that given the schedule of hiring the new Coordinator for the OED, it is recommended that the EDC push back the EDC town meetings until November. Chairman Jones asked volunteers to join the SPC and Mr. Wanner, Mr. Beatty, Ms. Vanhooser, Vice Chairman Silverstein and Chairman Jones signed up as members of the subcommittee.

**Business Retention Report:** The County Manager reported there were concerns from The Whalen Company at the last EDC meeting regarding expansion in Talbot County. The County made an offer to The Whalen Company providing an option to lease space in the Black & Decker Building. The County is also working with Maverick Transport who would like to extend their lease for their operations in the Black & Decker Building. Additionally, Mr. Henry reported there was interest from August Classic to store classic automobiles in Black & Decker Building.

**County Manager's Report:** Mr. Hollis reported 14 applications have been received by the preferred date regarding the position of Coordinator of the OED. The County Council has invited Chairman Jones to participate in the interview panel. The goal is to have the Coordinator appointed by mid-late October.

Mr. Hollis reported the County Council would like some suggestions from the EDC as to how to fill Paul Makosky's position. A discussion ensued regarding which industry the EDC would like to see at the table and the members all agreed to a non-profit organization. Vice Chairman Silverstein reported Talbot County has over 250 registered non-profit organizations. The EDC will email their recommendations to Chairman Jones, who will then contact the individuals regarding their interest to serve on the EDC. Chairman Jones will forward the list of interested parties to the County Council for consideration.

Mr. Hollis reported the County is gearing up for hurricane Hermine, the storm that is coming up from the south. There will be increasing updates provided to the community as the storm tracks inland up the east coast towards Talbot County.

Mr. Hollis indicated the County receives a monthly summation from the board of realtors about housing sales and asked Mr. Bautz if there was a similar report about commercial real estate. Mr. Bautz reported that the board of realtors could generate a commercial industry report and to contact Debbie Wilkins at the Mid Shore Board of Realtors.

**Chairman's Report:** Chairman Jones reported the annual Farm Tour hosted by the Talbot County Farm Bureau and Talbot County Extension Office will be held on Saturday, September 10, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The tour begins at Talbot County Agriculture Service Center, 28577 Mary's Court in Easton.

On Sunday, September 11, 2016 at 8:30 a.m., there will be a ceremony to commemorate the events of September 11, 2001. The ceremony will be held at Dogwood Harbor in Tilghman. A breakfast will follow at the Tilghman Volunteer Fire Company at 9:30 a.m. At 11:00 a.m., the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fireman's Olympics at Kronsberg Park will take place. In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the auditorium of the Tilghman Elementary School.

The Talbot County Council has wanted to do something special for all the various board and committee members of Talbot County; therefore, on September 20<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 5:30 p.m., the County Council will host an Appreciation Reception to honor all of the board and committee members. The reception will be held at the Talbot Senior Center located at 400 Brookletts Avenue, Easton.

### **Town & Member Reports:**

**Jacqueline Wilson, Small Business:** reported the PNC Branch on Elliott Road, on the other side of Route 50 is closing.

**Vice Chairman Silverstein, Chamber of Commerce:** reported he is in the process of organizing a Regional Job Fair, scheduled for Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, from 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. The County Council has been very generous sponsoring the event in-kind by providing the venue at the Talbot County Community Center. At this time there are 43 companies registered. There will be a "resource center" with eight service providers such as Maryland Workforce Exchange, Department of Veterans Affairs, Workforce Investment Board, Talbot County Library, the MUST Bus, etc. Many volunteers will be on-hand to offer tips for interviewing with employers, locating available transportation, adult educational courses and important career guidance services. The M1 mobile career center will be on hand for this event to assist with resumes and online applications. The Job Fair is well advertised. Last year 62 companies participated and 250 people registered.

**Mike Henry, Airport:** reported Easton Airport Day was held on Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup> and there were more airplanes and more people this year which resulted in overflow of the overflow parking. Mr. Henry reported Airport Day received enough money to donate to their non-profit partners. The training of the 245 Midshipman was completed on August 17<sup>th</sup>. The Easton Hangar had their grand opening on August 13<sup>th</sup>, which will help with much needed hangar space as the demand is up. The Easton Airport received a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration for \$195,000, a reimbursement for planning the runway extension. The rehabilitation of the Lower T-Hangar taxilanes will begin on Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, which is a \$1.3 million project. Sugar Buns will have their ribbon cutting on September 1<sup>st</sup> from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Sugar Buns will now be offering dinner al fresco and will be able to offer alcohol with their newly acquired liquor license.

The County Manager commended Mr. Henry for all of the successful projects at the Easton Airport and especially for Mr. Henry's attention to customer service. The County Manager presented a current example of how Mr. Henry provided immediate assistance with an alternative option in order to satisfy a client's grievance.

**Ted Bautz, Commercial Real Estate:** pulled a report indicating there are roughly 135 commercial properties in Talbot County that are for sale and/or lease. Part of the inventory is obsolete and there are pricing factors but the commercial properties are selling at/or below assessed values. Mr. Beatty indicated it is hard to build a house in Talbot County because of the inventory issues.

**Craig Wanner, Manufacturing:** thanked the County Manager for listening to his concerns regarding the issues surrounding The Whalen Company's plans to expand. The management staff was pleased and impressed with how fast the Town, County and State responded to their business needs. The Whalen Company feels revitalized knowing they have an opportunity to stay in Talbot County. However, the company will need to hire many employees and are still uncertain about the long-term labor aspect.

Mr. Wanner recommended forming a group of manufacturers to hold a forum in order to discuss issues pertaining to the industry's needs. Labor will be one issue. Mr. Wanner suggested a vocational school for the surrounding counties. Chairman Jones mentioned the P-Tech initiatives in the three counties, which focuses on workforce skills. Chairman Jones offered to work with Mr. Wanner's subcommittee. Vice Chairman Silverstein suggested pulling manufacturers together and conducting a P-Tech presentation. A discussion ensued regarding the specifics of P-Tech. Mr. Wanner indicated he would like to see private employers become more involved.

**Cassandra Vanhooser, Tourism:** reported Talbot County Office of Tourism is hosting the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA) Annual Media Marketplace scheduled for September 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>. There are 67 MATPRA members and 58 journalists, as well as the editorial director of Rand McNally, the editor of National Geographic Traveler, writers from Alaska and Canada and all those on the Eastern Seaboard. The three-day event convenes at The Tidewater Inn and the tours will cover as much of the tourism related businesses in Talbot County as possible. With sponsorships and registration, the Office of Tourism has raised roughly \$65,000 to cover expenses. Ms. Vanhooser thanked the towns for their contributions. For further information, please see the MATPRA website: <http://www.matpra.org/getattachment/About/About/MATPRA.pdf.aspx>

**Ron Engle, Town of Easton:** reported the attorney representing the Maryland Health Club, LLC (MHC) indicated the grass would be cut today or tomorrow. The MHC plans to open the restaurant in November, with farm-to-table and medically supervised health menu. The owners have plans to expand the clubhouse. Mr. Engle reported there is another grocery store, named Lidl, coming to Waterside Village. Lidl is number one in Europe and Aldi is number two. The State Highway Administration (SHA) has approved a design for the traffic light at Marlboro Avenue and Route 33. Previously, the design had been rejected because they failed to allow for bike and pedestrian crossings and there are plans to continue with the Rails-to-Trails through that intersection.

**Scott Beatty, Large Business:** reported banking business is going well for Shore Bancshares; however, a disproportionate amount of business is outside of Talbot County. Delaware is very business friendly.

**Gerald O'Mara, Agriculture:** reported supplies are abundant and prices are low. The corn harvest is just beginning to get started. The new Agricultural program at Chesapeake College will begin soon.

**Jean Weisman, Town of St. Michaels:** reported the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM) has their boat auction this weekend. The town is also gearing up for this weekend's storm. Most of the stores that were empty are filling up with new businesses; only a couple of stores are still vacant. It was a busy summer season once the rain stopped.

**Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported the Agricultural classes began a week ago and they have ten students; for a new program that is a good number. The college also has a Landscape Architectural program, a hybrid course partially online using the CAD system. The college is reaching out to the business community, working with them to provide a workforce with the necessary business skills in order for the business community to be successful. Chairman Jones reported that he is working with the new Vice President of Academic Affairs, Clay Railey to redesign the whole academic structure, making it more user friendly for students to discover the college, learn what the college has to offer and how to enroll. Chairman Jones expressed this is a good time to discuss P-Tech and the needs of our business community.

Vice Chairman Silverstein brought up a program from the past, Manufacturing Education Partnership for Excellence (MEPE), very similar to the Free Enterprise Workshop Program that opens a dialogue between educators and employers. Vice Chairman Silverstein is working with Debbie Urry, Pam Clay and Angela Visintainer to get this program up and running again for this semester. The program involves educators touring local companies to gain first-hand knowledge of their operations. Then, as part of the course, which offers three continuing education credits, the educators create a lesson plan for their students based on what they have learned with the goal of educating their students about area businesses.

Chairman Jones continued his report regarding the various classes and programs the college is offering as well as the challenges to overcome.

**Tracy Ward, Easton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC):** reported the soft launch of Chesapeake Harvest continues. The EEDC is waiting to hear from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding a sizable grant. This grant will fund the operations of the sales for three years. With regard to Port Street, the draft of the Small Area Master Plan has been released and can be reviewed on the EEDC webpage. The summary of recommendations may also be reviewed on the EEDC website (<http://eastonedc.com/projects/port-street-redevelopment>). The plan is presently moving through the Town of Easton's formal approval process; it has already gone through the Town Planning & Zoning Department. The first public hearing, regarding the plan, is scheduled for November 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Four property owners on Port Street have petitioned for annexation.

**Scott Warner, Mid Shore Regional Council:** No report.

**Jennifer Shull, Town of Trappe:** reported the Pascal Family's pizza restaurant will open soon and the Talbot Smokehouse restaurant is doing very well. The Town Council is implementing an enforced rental license and inspection program to ensure everyone has a safe living environment.

**Terenda Thomas, Department of Labor, License and Regulation (DLLR):** reported when DLLR runs workshops designated specifically for those who are unemployed, they are going to place emphasis on the segment addressing how to be successful at job fairs. DLLR has recently re-launched the Maryland Business Works Program (MBWP). The focus is to provide training to enhance the skill level of existing employees. There is \$500,000 allocated for the program, and with the dollar-for-dollar match by employers, this represents a \$1 million dollar investment in MD businesses. The MBWP is focusing primarily on small businesses with 250 employees or less. The training received by employees will positively impact retention, growth, and expansion. Participating employees must have been on the job for at least six months. DLLR is waiting for word on whether or not there will be an extension of the JD NEG Program, which is an on-the-job training program. Ms. Thomas provided an outline of the JD NEG Program. Lastly, DLLR is gearing up to put the emphasis on apprenticeship, as there are very few apprenticeship opportunities on the Eastern Shore. The plan is to have one of the existing business services staff market apprenticeships with Eastern Shore businesses.

**Cheryl Lewis, Town of Oxford (sitting in for Peter Dunbar):** reported the strategic plan is being finalized for the historic commercial district and the economic development for the Town of Oxford. The town also received a grant for the working waterfront. Both plans, when completed, will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan. The development of The Mews Building is still under consideration; the building potentially has 3 storefronts and 3 – 6 apartments. The Town of Oxford has a business interested in opening a café in the historic commercial district. The Oxford Marinas are at about a 60% capacity. The town slips are always full and have a waiting list. The working waterfront study will look at Oxford's community needs, including economic development and revitalization, maritime job growth, and strategic planning and zoning. Ms. Lewis expressed her concern about regulations, as they lost a gas pump last year.

**Kelly Simonsen, Easton Utilities (EU):** reported John Horner is the new Vice President of Operations at EU. EU is wrapping up the gas main project in town, at which point 80% of the infrastructure for the gas facilities will be current. Within 3 – 4 weeks, the roads will be paved. EU is installing new overhead lines along the bypass in front of the old Black & Decker Building, which will improve reliability.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Chairman Jones motioned to adjourn, Vice Chairman Silverstein seconded and the motion carried unanimously at 8:54 a.m.

**Next Economic Development Commission Meetings:**

**October 6<sup>th</sup>**, Talbot County Government Offices, 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Easton, Conference Room 1  
Easton-November 3<sup>rd</sup>; Trappe-December 1<sup>st</sup>; Oxford-January 5<sup>th</sup>; St. Michaels-February 2<sup>nd</sup> Venues TBD