A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 2nd day of May 2024, with the following present:

Present:
Lisa S. Andrews, Chair
William A. Croxton, Vice-Chairman
Jamie Segar
David Holt
Skip Weiss

Absent:
Ronnie Sidney
Tim Smith - Treasurer

Also present:
Ronnie Gill – Essex County Board of Supervisors
Chris Rose – Rappahannock Times
Tommy Blackwell – Public
Roburt Kickler – Historic Downtown Tappahannock

RE: CALL TO ORDER
Chairman Lisa Andrews called the meeting to order. A quorum was met.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Mr. Holt made a motion for approval of the April 4, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion was seconded.
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Mr. Holt made a motion for the approval of the meeting minutes for the April 29, 2024 meeting with members of the Planning Commission and Building and Zoning department. Motion was seconded.
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Minutes from the April 25, 2024 Tourism Action Plan meeting were not available and will distributed when they are completed.

RE: TREASURER’S REPORT
Mr. Smith provided his report in absentia. The checking account balance is $16,403.63. The 12-month CD value was $15,712.86. Interest to date this fiscal year is $712.86 (2/13/23-2/13/24). Interest on the new CD is due in May. The total fund balance is $32,226.49. One check written for $299.00 to Hampton
Inn for the Tourism Action Plan meeting for the meeting space has cleared. Of the funds above, $920.00 is for the Keep Essex Clean campaign. Motion to approve the report was made and seconded. Ayes: Nays: 0

**RE: GUEST SPEAKER – ROBURT KICKLER – HISTORIC DOWNTOWN TAPPAHANNOCK**

Mr. Kickler is the interim Executive Director of HDT. Mr. Kickler noted that with him coming on board with HDT and a new president of the HDT Board, this is a period of transition. They are working to speed up some things and complete other items and then charge forward.

HDT’s overall goal of involving the community and supporting local businesses remains the same. Funding is on the table and once that is finalized, HDT will be able to determine what they can undertake going forward. The current primary focus is the Farmer’s Market. The Dining for Dollars campaign was a great success and has wrapped up.

Mr. Kickler also indicated that the HDT app in conjunction with the Dining for Dollars campaign has provided the opportunity to have people sign up for the app. As a result, HDT can send information to those folks regarding events and activities in the town. The goal is to have enough interaction and subscribers that HDT can approach businesses for advertising on the site/app and help offset expenses.

Mr. Croxton noted the Chamber of Commerce and HDT have similar interests as HDT and that a joint meeting may be helpful in merging the goals of the two organizations.

Funding of HDT was discussed and Mr. Kickler noted that grant money for the HDT app was ending in November and that with Essex County no longer funding HDT, they were seeking another grant. Mr. Gill noted that the funding by the county was via an agreement that had expired and that the county had extended support for a year after the agreement expired. Additionally, discussion revolved around how HDT may able to acquire funding/grants. Mr. Gill noted that the county could do “in kind” contributions for grants and that the grant writer on staff could assist in writing grants.

There was very general discussion about communication and combining calendars for one master calendar. In addition, “pushing” information via email/text was seen as a possibility. It was noted that emails often get cluttered with those types of emails.

The idea of a kiosk/community calendar sign also was a topic of conversation. Ms. Andrews noted that Mr. Croxton was working on that project. Mr. Segar reminded the group that there are folks that are not comfortable with computers and a kiosk or sign would be much more effective for them.

Related to the communication and kiosk, there was also discussion of the Tappahannock/Essex marketing website (https://visittappahannock.com/). This site is funded by both entities and staffed by the town. Currently the events page is blank and there may be an opportunity to coordinate this site in the calendaring and communication efforts above. In addition, the logo needs to include Essex Co.
Mr. Kickler also reported that the first Farmer’s Market was successful. The spaces were sold out and there was an exhibition of birds of prey. He also noted that the market will move back up to Cross St. due to construction and will likely move again as construction proceeds.

**RE: OLD BUSINESS**

*Tourism Initiatives:*  
Ms. Andrews reported that the meeting on tourism at the Hampton Inn on April 25, 2024 was well attended. Attendees included representatives from Wind Vineyards, the Essex County Museum, the Rappahannock Roundstern. In addition, two members of the county Board of Supervisors attended as did on county staff person. There was no representative from the Town of Tappahannock. Two board members of the Essex County Board of Supervisors attended. Separate minutes from the meeting provide greater detail.

Laura Messer of the VTC facilitated the discussion and will provide a tourism action plan to the EDA by the end of May. It is anticipated that the new part-time Director of Economic Development (anticipated for July) will be tasked with managing that plan.  

*Facade Grant Applications:*  
None pending.

*Historic Downtown Tappahannock (HDT):*  
HDT is also co-sponsoring “Soul by the River” on May 11th.

*EDA Website:*  
As discussed in the meeting, Messrs. Smith and Holt will arrange for an interactive viewing of the pages for the June meeting.

*Board of Supervisors:*  
Mr. Gill reported that there is $44,400 in the FY2024 budget for the EDA and we simply need to invoice the county to have it made available to us. Mr. Holt, in Mr. Smith’s absence, submitted an invoice in that amount to Ms. Davis and Mr. Smith is to pick up the check after he returns.

*Chamber of Commerce:*  
No Report

*Zoning:*  
No Report
RE: NEW BUSINESS

Following up on the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250) information that Mr. Blackwell shared with the EDA, Ms. Andrews presented a resolution for the EDA to ask the Essex County Board of Supervisors to approve a resolution to form a VA250 committee for the county. Mr. Croxton made a motion to approve the EDA resolution, motion was seconded. Ayes: 5, Nays: 0 A copy of the resolution as approved is attached.

Mr. Holt volunteered to represent the EDA on the committee and facilitate the formation of the committee. Applicants may apply for the committee using the application process found on the county’s website.

Ms. Andrews reported on the National Park Service’s invitation to Tappahannock and Essex County to be one of five “Gateway Communities to the Chesapeake Bay.” Hampton, Virginia is the only other Virginia community selected. Also selected were Annapolis, Cambridge, and Havre de Grace, all in Maryland. Ms. Andrews, Mr. Croxton, and many representatives from the town, county, and non-governmental organizations attended a Park Service briefing on April 30 to learn about the program.

Ms. Andrews credited the Tappahannock/Essex website, HDT site and the GIS maps that Zoning has compiled as great resource material for the selection. The NPS used much information found in those resources for their presentation.

Grants for this program open up in July and would need to be submitted by the end of November. Total amount of grants is $1,000,000 to be divided by the six selected locations (Cambridge, MD, Annapolis, MD, Havre de Grace, MD, Tappahannock, VA, Hampton, VA. and Cape Charles, VA). The Park Service will also offer extensive training, technical assistance, and access to grant programs offered by other federal agencies to promote tourism focused on the natural resources, history, and culture of the Chesapeake basin.

There will be a four-day workshop in Hampton on May 28/29 regarding the program. Ms. Andrews will represent the EDA at these meetings. The EDA will consider her receipts for reimbursement.

RE: CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Andrews made a motion for a closed session to discuss personnel matters. She informed the members of the requirements of the closed session. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 5, Nays: 0.

After the meeting roll was taken and all five members were present. Mr. Holt made a motion that the to the best of the members’ knowledge, the subject matter (personnel) was the only business matter discussed and exempted from public disclosure. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 5, Nays: 0

RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, June 6, 2024 at 9:00AM.
RE: ADJOURNMENT
Motion was made to adjourn and seconded. All Ayes

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Secretary, David Holt