

**MINUTES
ESSEX COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
April 7, 2022**

A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 7th day of April, 2022, with the following present:

William A. Croxton, Chairman
Lisa Andrews, Vice-Chairman
Tim Smith – Treasurer
David Holt
James L. Acors, Jr.
Jamie Segar
Ronnie Sidney

RE: CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Croxton called the meeting to order. A quorum was met.

RE: INTRODUCTION OF NEW EDA MEMBERS

Chairman Croxton announced that the EDA has two new members and asked them to introduce themselves. James Acors, Jr. has lived in this area for 15 years after residing in Spotsylvania County for 25 years before that. He started his garden center in Tappahannock in April of 2021. He said it has been a challenge to get the word out and has talked to the Town about additional signage. Ronnie Sidney II grew up in Essex County and intends to remain here. He would like to see more public river access in the County.

RE: AGENDA REVIEW

Nothing was added to the Agenda.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the last EDA meeting held on March 3, 2022. All AYES.

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Smith reported that \$10,225.35 is the balance in the checking account and there are two Certificate of Deposit with balances of \$30,942.96 and \$2,578.90 for a total of \$43,726.88. Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report and Ms. Andrews seconded the motion. All AYES.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Croxton skipped the guest speakers as they have not yet arrived and asked Ms. Andrews to give a Façade Committee report.

Façade Committee Report

Ms. Andrews stated that the Town of Tappahannock façade grant is set at \$7500 and the County EDA is \$2500. She suggested changes be made to the EDA façade grant application to make it more appropriate and clearer to the applicant. The priorities of the grant should be as follows: does it make the building(s) prettier; does it promote economic development; and does it promote jobs. She suggested the EDA members review the red-lined changes and vote on the revised application next month. Ms. Andrews stressed that applicants need to match the grants, however, there will be an exception for non-profits. She suggested curbing be removed and a timeline added. Photos showing the before and after need to be provided. The entire County needs to be included not just the Town of Tappahannock. Mr. Holt added that the façade must be visible from a State maintained road. Ms. Andrews pointed out that the Essex Inn and Shackelford applications are not complete.

RE: GUEST SPEAKERS

Liz Martin – President of VCU Tappahannock Hospital

Ms. Martin stated that VCU took over the hospital in Tappahannock in January 2021. VCU did an assessment on community based needs with 100 stakeholders. Also, using MyChart, a survey was conducted in which 1500 responses were received. Ms. Martin stated that Essex County ranks 124 out of 133 counties in the state for health and longevity. The Tappahannock hospital service area has 70,000 citizens, of which, 13% are below the poverty level; 13% over the age of 25 do not have a high school education; 11% under the age of 65 are uninsured; and the income level is below the median for the state. The main theme gleaned from the survey is lack of access to primary care physicians. Ms. Martin said VCU is recruiting hard to solve this problem, especially since Dr. Cleary is moving to the concierge model this July, as did Dr. Dameron in Warsaw. Dr. Robinson will be replacing Dr. Cleary but only for one year. VCU is recruiting for another doctor at that facility as well as nurse practitioners. She reported that there will be a strong presence of nurse practitioners in Callao and Warsaw.

Ms. Martin indicated that VCU will be working on the following objectives:

- 1) Expanding telehealth
- 2) Increasing specialty coverage especially surgical specialists
- 3) Creating follow up treatments
- 4) Machine improvement
- 5) Expanding oncology
- 6) Securing renal oncologists
- 7) Adding an OBGYN doctor
- 8) Dr. Sharp has been added to orthopedics
- 9) Coordinating with Bay Aging
- 10) Working with Rappahannock Community College to train health care workers and
- 11) Partnering with the existing Tappahannock Free Clinic

Ms. Martin stated that Tappahannock is the primary geographical center for this area and if and when a new hospital is built, the location would most likely be in Tappahannock. She said education is the biggest factor critical to the success of the hospital. The school system is a barrier to attracting qualified people to Essex County. The hospital's website has a list of Doctors available as well as their contact information. She would welcome any suggestions to getting the word out to people.

Castiglia's Restaurant – Luigi Castiglia, owner

Mr. Castiglia bought the old Lowery's building one year ago and originally he was going to lease it out. However, he decided to open the restaurant himself as many of his Fredericksburg patrons have asked when he will open in Tappahannock. He stated that he had to totally gut the building. He hopes to open at least the outside patio with a truck equipped with a pizza oven this May. He asked the EDA members to look into building a boat dock to attract boaters to the downtown area. One of his restaurants in Fredericksburg employs 40 servers and he is looking to add between 45 to 50 jobs here in Tappahannock. Kay Carlton, a member of the Town Counsel, suggested the employment opportunity should be conveyed to the schools and that the town will be establishing a park behind the restaurant.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

County Administrator Update

Chairman Croxton asked the County Administrator, Michael Lombardo, to give his update.

Mr. Lombardo reported that he is working on five objectives:

- 1) An Economic Summit will be held on April 23, 2022 in the morning. Invitations will go out soon. Chairman Croxton asked if the EDA members are invited and Mr. Lombardo answered in the affirmative.
- 2) He is working on attracting new businesses to the area as well as value added agriculture.
- 3) A vendor is needed to guide the County in economic development
- 4) He has interviewed for a second Assistant County Administrator who will provide strong internal leadership in budget and finance. Mr. Lombardo is also investing in a budget software platform.
- 5) He is looking at expanding the Industrial Park as there is a need for a place to put businesses. It must be shovel ready with utilities already in place.

Chairman Croxton added that the head of the Virginia Department of Agriculture is coming to the Old Beale Sanctuary on May 5, 2022 for a talk and a social.

Farmer's Market

Chairman Croxton indicated that the Rotary Club has not written a check to the Farmer's Market for its sponsorship. He said the Rotary has not been able to hold its fundraisers recently due to COVID.

Foundation for the Future

Ms. Andrews asked what has been done with this and Chairman Croxton suggested having the summit first to get ideas and suggested an urban planner is needed to put all the ideas together.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be postponed from May 5, 2022 and rescheduled for May 19, 2022 at the regular time and place.

Façade approvals

A motion was made and seconded to approve the two pending façade grant applications conditional upon submission of correct documentation. All AYES.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chairman Croxton entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Andrews so moved. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Chairman of the Board, Bill Croxton