

MINUTES
ESSEX COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
July 7, 2022

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

William A. Croxton, Chairman

Lisa Andrews, Vice-Chairman

Tim Smith – Treasurer

David Holt

James L. Acors, Jr.

Ronnie Sidney

Jamie Segar

Also present: Rob Hodges, Essex County Planning and Zoning Administrator

Tommy Blackwell, Commissioner of the Revenue

Chris Rhodes, Rappahannock Times

Roy Gladding, Mayor of Tappahannock

Bud Smith, Board of Supervisors

Sidney Johnson, Board of Supervisors

Beth Sharpe, Tappahannock Main Street

Kay Carlton, Town Council

Absent:

RE: AGENDA REVIEW

Chairman Croxton introduced the special guest, Perry Hickman.

Perry Hickman

Mr. Hickman is the Virginia Rural Development State Director. They are a major lender for funding rural development. The agency is committed to helping the rural communities build their economy and the quality of life for their residents. There are 29 agencies in USDA. Rural Development has 40 different programs that are laid out in the handout. It is like a three-legged stool: Rural housing service, Rural Business and Cooperative Program, Rural Utilities Service.

USDA Rural Development has identified 3 key priorities that will provide pathways to facilitate economic growth. 1) To assist rural communities that are recovering economically from impacts of COVID 19. 2) Ensure that all rural residents have equitable access to all RD programs and benefit from funding those projects. 3) Reduce climate pollution and increase resiliency to the impact of climate change for economic support in those communities. He emphasized that infrastructure is a big part of their priorities.

Mr. Hickman has worked with community facilities where they provided affordable funding to communities that provide essential services for the community. They also provided funds for hospitals,

schools, nursing homes etc. Rural communities use EDA's as a mechanism to borrow funds. Each Program through the Rural Development has a different definition of Rural. We partner with several lenders to help with the housing and business program and we are always looking for more.

There are many who are working at trying to promote river access to our citizens with 45 miles of river access. Mrs. Andrews asked if the Rural Development would help with funding? Mr. Hickman said they could possibly help with a county owned dock but would need to check about the marina.

Mrs. Andrews asked if Mr. Hickman could weigh in in support of a grant process for infrastructure bill through the department of transportation. Mr. Hickman was not able to do so as it could be a conflict of interest. She asked the question what would be some suggestions as work around for the lack of funds that the EDA has when it comes to grant matching? Mr. Hickman suggest asking a philanthropic organization that would have interest in that program and although it varies from program to program if those funds would be considered as grant matching.

A question was asked regarding the airport hanger if they assisted in construction funds. Mr. Hickman said that it would be on the loan side not a grant. The airport is also looking at expanding the runway and the taxiways. The question was asked if the additional 500 ft of runway would allow for FedEx or UPS to land. The answer was given that it would put the airport up to allowing 737. It would also allow for be the Richmond offshoot, commercial airport size.

The question was asked if the Rural Development gets into a public/private partnership. Mr. Hickman stated that more information would need to be given.

Mrs. Andrews asked if funding was available for a sporting complex whether the county's ownership of land count as part of the equity portion of our contribution. There is a piece of land that could be devoted to sports and recreation, walking trails, kayaking, and baseball stadiums for little league. The county owns the land is it something that the EDA could help to provide funding for grants and loans. Mr. Hickman stated that the Community Facilities does not deal with recreation. The Rural Business could potentially help with a guaranteed loan.

Tappahannock Main Street Director Beth Sharpe asked if their rural business program offered funds to help acquire property to create incubator space for businesses and programs? Mr. Hickman said they do have programs that would allow for incubator with a specified number of months that they could occupy the space.

Supervisor Johnson asked if they work with BayAging on housing. Mr. Hickman said they worked with BayAging in renovating their facilities.

Chairman Croxton thanked Mr. Hickman for coming to talk with them and dismissed those that came to listen.

RE: CALL TO ORDER

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

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Croxton asked for the approval of the minutes from the June 2, 2022 meeting. There was a motion and a second. All Ayes.

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Smith reported that the checking account currently has \$7,225.35 with a check still out for \$2,500 which will bring it down to \$4,725.35. In our 12 month CD we have \$2,580.20. Our 12-15 month \$30,962.46. Totaling \$40,768.01. There was a motion to approve the treasurers report and seconded. All Ayes.

Tappahannock Main Street

Mrs. Sharpe reported they are interviewing for a part-time events marketing director. This person would help with all the events and help Mrs. Sharpe with marketing pieces. She also stated that the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute will be here next week focusing on development in rural communities. Revitalization professionals, developers, investors, government officials are the types of people that are in this group. The Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck is one of their major focuses because they feel we need a lot more help than other areas in the state. They do everything locally while they are here and will be spending \$30,000 during their time in the community.

It was suggested to have a representative of their group come and talk with the EDA to explain the program.

Strategic Planning

Vice Chairman Andrews reported that four EDA members met as the first step in a strategic planning process. The meeting focused on EDA's historical activities and a review of the June Economic Summit of local officials. They look forward to the next Economic Summit and believe it will be a catalyst for bringing the EDA, county, and town together. They are looking for a report for the Economic Summit's last meeting. She feels there needs to be more training for the EDA. Supervisor Smith stated that he took away from the Summit that unless we have an EDA Director nothing will happen. Approval has been given for an EDA director but no advertising has been done. They also feel the town should contribute to that as well.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Croxton brought up the facade Grant application from Luigi Castiglias, the new owner of Lowery's Restaurant, and commented that they are qualified with what they have done so far. Vice Chairman Andrews says that it is incomplete and has no supporting documents to explain where the money goes. They put in the boat and did some exterior work but there needs to be receipts to show. The application was tabled until a completed application is provided. The new application needs to be updated on the website.

RE: NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Croxton shared an email from a Michelle Mindy, Virginia Business Ready Sites Program. They have a seminar July 12 and July 19th at 2pm. They provide grant funding for expansion but you need grant matching.

Vice Chairman Andrews asked Supervisor Smith about the budget. When an opportunity arises for some grant money, could they provide it to the Board for seed money or does it have to be done during the budget season. Supervisor Smith said if it is not part of the regular budget, then it would be up to the board if they wanted to take the funds out of the reserves.

RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 4, 2022.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn and seconded. All Ayes

Chairman of the Board, Bill Croxton