

**MINUTES  
ESSEX COUNTY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
December 7, 2023**

A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 5th day of December 2023, with the following present:

Present:

Lisa S. Andrews, Chair  
William A. Croxton, Vice-Chairman  
Tim Smith – Treasurer  
David Holt  
Skip Weiss  
Ronnie Gill - remote

Also present:

Kay Carlton – Town of Tappahannock Council  
Chris Rhodes – Rappahannock Times  
Tommy Blackwell – Commissioner of Revenue  
Beth Sharpe – Historic Downtown Tappahannock

Absent:

Jamie Segar  
Ronnie Sidney

RE: CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lisa Andrews called the meeting to order. A quorum was met.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Andrews asked for the approval of the minutes from the September 7, 2023 meeting as presented. David Holt made the motion to approve. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Tim Smith stated that the checking account balance was \$15,857.63. There were no checks written for the month. The 12-month CD was \$15,530.06. Interest to date this fiscal year is \$530.06. The total fund balance is \$31,387.06. Motion to approve the report was made and seconded.

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Old Business

Facade Grant Applications: None pending

Historic Downtown Tappahannock:

Ms. Sharpe updated the EDA on recent events and activities. Winterfest was a great success, the events went off well and there was an excellent turnout. The team will now begin evaluating the events that took place during the year and continue planning for 2024.

A portion of the \$90,000 grant that was received is being used for a mobile app titled "Tap In and Connect." It is also being used for the "double dollars" gift card program. For example, if a person purchased a \$100 gift card (Mastercard type), they would receive two \$100 cards to spend with participating merchants. The design of the program allows only participating retailers capable of accepting the cards. Potential participating retailers are those that are located between Hoskins creek and the June Parker marina. Currently, there are about 25 vendors registered.

Other items that Ms. Sharpe noted were that some funds were going to be used for unique seating areas in downtown and she hopes to integrate Multiple Listing Service (MLS) into the Tap In and Connect app. Mr. Holt and Ms. Sharpe will meet and discuss how that may be accomplished. They are also exploring putting photos of available properties on the app.

Her team is also working on developing and promoting tours of the downtown area and hope to build them out for 2024.

HDT also received a \$9,000 award to promote tourism from the Virginia Tourism Commission. It was just received, so specific uses for it are to be determined, but ideas include: Billboards, Articles, Ads in papers.

Ms. Sharpe also discussed the upcoming Farmer's Market season. The team is currently soliciting vendors for 2024. One area of emphasis is to bring more farmers back to the market. Over the years, farm fresh products have declined. A specific procedure for application and acceptance for vendors called "Market Spread" and it is an online process. The market could be an incubator space for new businesses.

EDA Website:

Mr. Smith reported that the process of developing a more robust website is ongoing. He and Mr. Holt hope to have a mock up ready for the February meeting.

Ms. Andrews noted that she has located a couple more properties in town that do not appear to be on loopnet.net. She also indicated that data collected early in the year during the strategic planning process may be beneficial to new and existing businesses in the area. Demographic data such as education may be useful.

Board of Supervisors:

Mr. Croxton reported that the BOS meets on Tuesday and that there are several major decisions that may be addressed.

Chamber of Commerce:

Mr. Croxton reported the Chamber is up to about 50 members now. The Chamber is growing and open to new businesses joining. Cost is \$100/year. The Chamber is not only just for the town, but also for the entire county. Quarterly events are planned for 2024.

Zoning:

Mr. Smith reported on Zoning and indicated that the PUD and Comprehensive Land Use Plan are the primary efforts of the department at this time.

#### New Business

Laura Messer with the Virginia Tourism Corporation will be extended an invitation to the January meeting of the EDA. Mr. Croxton indicated that she has agreed to attend.

VA250 was also discussed. Mr. Blackwell mentioned that he had attended an event at the General Assembly and Ms. Cheryl Wilson is the Executive Director of the VA250 commission. There will be a mobile exhibit touring the state. Mr. Blackwell provided her/commission with copies of the booklet on the Essex resolutions and they will include that information in their program.

The Transient Tax Revenues for tourism were discussed and how they may dovetail with the VA250 effort. In the discussion, the amount of the tax that is required to be used for tourism was up to 5%. Any additional amount will be discretionary.

Mr. Smith and Carlos presented a map showing the short term rentals currently registered and discussed potential next steps for the programs. In addition, Mr. Smith distributed maps showing properties zoned for business and industrial applications.

#### RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 9:00AM.

#### RE: ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn and seconded. All Ayes

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Secretary, David Holt