

**MINUTES
ESSEX COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
April 27, 2023**

A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 27th day of April 2023, with the following present:

Present:

Lisa Andrews, Chairman
William A. Croxton, Vice-Chairman
Tim Smith – Treasurer
Ronnie Sidney - Remote
David Holt - Remote

Also present:

Shannon Kennedy – President Rappahannock Community College
Tommy Blackwell – Essex County Treasurer
Chris Rhodes – Rappahannock Times
Ronnie Gill – Essex Board of Supervisors
June Monterio – 7 and M Development, LLC.
Shiree Monterio – 7 and M Development, LLC.

Absent:

James Acors
Jamie Segar

RE: CALL TO ORDER

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

Guest Speaker – Shannon Kennedy, President of Rappahannock Community College

Mrs. Shannon Kennedy gave a presentation regarding the programs offered by RCC.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Lisa Andrews asked for the approval of the minutes from the March 2, 2023 meeting as modified. Vice Chairman Croxton made the motion to approve. Tim Smith seconded. Ayes: 6 Nays: 0

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Tim Smith stated that as of April 25th the checking account balance was \$16,057.63. No checks were written for the month. The 12-month CD was \$15,000 there was no interest at this point. We are anticipating May before we get any interest on that. The Total fund balance is \$31,057.63. Vice Chairman Croxton made the motion to approve the report as presented. David Holt seconded. Ayes: 6 Nays: 0

Old Business

None

Liaison Reports

- Bill Croxton – Chamber of Commerce – The Chamber had a meet and greet Tuesday night at the Essex Inn. There have been about a half dozen new people join the Chamber. Ronnie Gill stated that Teresa had emailed him that 35 people attended. A question was raised regarding publicity for the event and Ronnie said that it was on the county website and on the radio as a PSA. He was not sure if outreach to nonmember businesses were notified. However, going forward the meetings will be held the fourth Tuesday of every other month. Chairman Andrews stated that she attended the first meet and greet and does not remember receiving a follow up and that is critical in trying to get the outreach.
- Ronnie Gill – Board of Supervisors – We were in budget season. This past Tuesday night the Board approved FY24 budget. It represents about a 7-8% increase over the prior year’s budget. The Board is tapping into the reserve balance for about \$1.3 million. That reserve money is mostly dedicated to capital improvements - the new EMS building and possibly the maintenance garage that will replace the school bus garage. The Board is still in the process of hiring a full-time County Administrator. Finalization with a firm to help facilitate that process is close. The firm will probably survey the citizens to see what they would like to see in an Administrator. By the time the position is posted, assess the applications and interview the top candidates, the Board anticipates that it will likely be the Fall before a new County Administrator is hired.
 - o Chairman Andrews stated that the EDA is keenly interested and anxious for the proposed EDA position to be filled. It is understood that with the Administrator position being vacant, that stymies filling that position. The EDA strongly encourages the Board to look at candidates who have a background and keen interest in Economic Development. The only way this County is going to thrive is through growth. Once the Administrator is in place, then the EDA position can be filled. Staff support for the EDA is critical.
 - o Ronnie Gill stated that if an Administrator can be hired by the fall, then they would be in place for the new budget season which would begin in January. Currently, the Interim County Administrator and the Town Manager are looking at dates, probably in July, for a joint retreat with the Town Council and the Board of Supervisors.
- Bill Croxton – Town Council – He met yesterday with Connie Dalton and Eric on a couple of personal signage requests. There is a lot going on in the town zoning having to do with signage and facades. We will need to stay in tune because there are going to be some changes. He is also going to be on the agenda for their next meeting. He is working on a project with Perdue to have a large American flag on their silos.
- James Acors (absent)– Airport Authority – Ronnie Gill stated that we have to have a formal letter that he resigned since he is still in his term and that has not been received.

- Tim Smith – Zoning – He spoke with the planning commission in regards to the Zoning ordinance change in reference to the short term rentals. The short term rental process was passed by the planning commission and the Board of Supervisors in April.
 - o Bill Croxton asked what was the outcome of that? Tim Smith stated he was just trying to clarify some language on what the penalties are if you don't follow the ordinance. It was just to make sure people know what is going on. It is also a permit as opposed to a registration.
 - o Tim Smith stated that they are discussing the Land Use plan. At last month's meeting it was just about one section not the Economic Development portion. He will talk to Rob to see what part they can play in that.

Strategic Planning – Lisa Andrews

Chairman Andrews stated that the Strategic Planning Committee, which is Bill, Tim, Ronnie, Jamie and Lisa, met 3 or 4 times and have gathered a lot of data in terms of county employment, demographics, and trying to get a list of available business sites. This could be shared on a site dedicated to the EDA. We have drafted a mission and vision statement. She would like a discussion to get feedback.

Essex County EDA Mission:

Promote economic development throughout Essex County to ignite entrepreneurship, attract new businesses and support existing business that provide sustainable, well-paid jobs for our residents of all backgrounds, and that will spur economic growth by tapping the opportunities offered by the Rappahannock River, our agricultural & forestry industries, tourism, and the county's strategic location between major economic centers.

Chairman Andrews stated we want to not only help new businesses but also our existing businesses. We want to see economic growth by tapping our existing resources. The heart and soul of our economy is agriculture and forestry. Tourism could expand dramatically. We need to take advantage of the fact that we lie between major metropolitan areas.

Essex County EDA Vision (two options presented)

Create an economic foundation that enhances our citizens quality of life, creates an attractive business environment, preserves our rich history, protects our abundant natural resources, and makes Essex County a vibrant place where people want to visit, work, and live throughout their lives.

Create an economic environment that enhances our citizens quality of life, creates an attractive business environment, preserves our rich history, protects our abundant natural resources, and makes Essex County a vibrant place where people want to visit, work, and live throughout their lives.

Chairman Andrews stated that too many people are raised here and then have to leave to find good jobs. If we could have good jobs here, good housing here, the things they want in life here we could keep and attract people to live here.

Ronnie Gill asked about the second paragraph in the EDA Vision were you and Chairman Andrews clarified that only one of the paragraphs would be the Vision.

Ronnie Gill stated the only difference was the word foundation or environment.

Chairman Andrews asked if there was a preference?

Vice Chairman Croxton stated environment.

Ronnie Gill asked if it could be 'Create and perpetuate an economic environment'? Because after you create it, you need to keep it going. Also, at the last sentence where it says 'where people want to visit' maybe saying 'where people and families want to visit?'

Tim Smith stated that they wanted it to sound active not passive.

David Holt stated that it should say 'businesses' as opposed to 'business.'

Tim Smith made a motion to accept the mission and vision statement as amended. Vice Chairman Croxton seconded. Ayes: 6 Nays: 0

The Mission and Vision statements as amended:

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Essex County EDA Vision:

Create and perpetuate an economic environment that enhances our citizens quality of life, creates an attractive business environment, preserves our rich history, protects our abundant natural resources, and makes Essex County a vibrant place where people and families want to visit, work, and live throughout their lives.

Ronnie Sidney – Tappahannock Main Street – stated that Beth apologized for not being able to make it as she was finishing up some grants. The Farmers' Market has returned the third Saturday of each month through October. The most recent event that Main Street is partnering with is HotMixVA which is having Soul by the River on May 13th at 3pm. That is a collaboration with Tappahannock Main Street. He will send an email out to the Board of her director's report. They were awarded a \$15,000 technical assistance grant from Virginia Mainstreet, which will provide assistance with their website and branding. There were other grants that she has applied for that he listed.

Chairman Andrews stated that all of the grants in process sound phenomenal and we will look forward to them coming to fruition. Is there any role the EDA can play in supporting that? Ronnie Sidney stated there is nothing that he has been told but he will reach out and let them know.

Old Business

Chairman Andrews welcomed an update on the Mt. Clement project with Shiree Monterio and June Monterio. Chairman Andrews stated the EDA members were asked for their perspectives from the Department of Zoning. All expressed overall support for the project, but did have some questions and some concerns that have been noted. Overall, there was no opposition. It is understood that the project still needs to go through Zoning and the Board of Supervisors.

Ronnie Gill stated that the project is still at the Planning Commission stage.

Mrs. Monterio stated she appreciates the support and wants to clarify the low-income aspect of the project. There may be some misinformation regarding that. The first clarification is there is more than just housing in the development that they are proposing. The project is attracting businesses and community services. The businesses already expressing interest would be bringing multiple services to the community as a whole. The YMCA has expressed interest and would take up take up about 1/3 of the commercial space. They have also talked to Sylvan Learning Center so they could bring tutoring and SAT prep.

Regarding the income piece, the housing that is being marketed will be trying to attract working individuals, working families, retirees. Those are the income levels we are going after. This is not subsidized housing. This is for the middle income workers. We have been compared to the other communities that Essex has and those are subsidized. They use state and federal programs with rent subsidy programs. That is not what we are providing.

The other clarification is that the developers are going to build what they say they are going to build. They will be the owners. It is their family legacy and they have no intent to sell.

They are working together with Rob, the Zoning Administrator and are hoping to go before the Planning Commission at the June meeting as well as the Board of Supervisors. They received letters of support from some organizations but there are some clarifications they would like to make.

Vice Chairman Croxton stated he was glad to hear all of that and asked if they had any utility challenges? They stated from a practical development standpoint, no. They have been in communication with Dominion and all of the utility providers and have plans for that. They have done the due diligence and analysis to show that they will not have a negative impact on the County and the Town's water supply system and infrastructure. Where the challenge is, the town and the County, are in a contract with the amount of water that is given to the County. Their understanding is that the County has legislation that the existing capacity is currently earmarked for potential industrial projects at either LaGrange or the airports. We would have to request some of that and that is where the challenge is.

Bill Croxton gave an update on the grants that have been given for facades.

RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, June 1, 2023 at 9:00AM.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn and seconded. All Ayes

Secretary, David Holt