

**MINUTES
ESSEX COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
February 1, 2024**

A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 1st day of February 2024, with the following present:

Present:

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

Also present:

April Rounds – Essex County Administrator
Ronnie Gill – Essex County Board of Supervisors
Kay Carlton – Town of Tappahannock Council
Beth Sharp – Historic Downtown Tappahannock
Chris Rhodes – Rappahannock Times
Tommy Blackwell – Public

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 January 4, 2024 meeting as presented. Mr. Holt made the motion to approve. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Mr. Holt made a motion that the minutes from the January 23, 2024 meeting with the Town of Tappahannock and representatives from VCU be approved. Note: Five members of the EDA were present requiring that minutes be recorded. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Smith stated that the checking account balance was \$15,782.63. One check for \$75.00 (reimbursement of VIDA training) was 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 \$31,312,.69. Motion to approve the report was made and seconded. Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

With the CD maturing, the following motion was made: Ms. Andrews and Mr. Smith are authorized to explore other CD or Money Market options within the county for maximizing the return and flexibility of

the amount currently in the expiring CD and exercise the selected option. Motion was seconded. Ayes 7
Nays: 0

RE: GUEST SPEAKER – APRIL ROUNDS, ESSEX COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. Rounds updated the EDA in this meeting and discussed staffing, which was on hold during the interim period. Staffing increase is now needed and the perspective of the roles may change somewhat with a focus on providing services to each other internally and ultimately better services and products for the citizens. She plans to be focused on hiring the right people for the right job, having the silo walls replaced with opening up communication with and between the staff, the Board, authorities and commissions.

There was also discussion of the potential for an Executive Director of Economic Development. In the past, the economic development role was shared with other duties. As was noted by several attendees, multiple roles with different reporting relationships often fails. Ms. Rounds suggested that the EDA develop a job description for a staff economic development position. She also recommended that it start as a part-time position, which may be able to be funded temporarily, and that based on progress made in that temporary period may be permanently funded by the Board and/or grown into a full-time position.

Ms. Rounds also indicated that the RAISE grant is at a standstill. Both the town and county are a bit frustrated by the delays, but both remain vigilant in checking on status.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Tourism Initiatives:

Ms. Andrews reported that planning sessions for the tourism community with Laura Messer of the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) have been scheduled for March 28, 2024 and April 25, 2024. The sessions are tentatively planned for 1:00pm to 5:00 pm each day. The venue is to be determined. The sessions are intended for businesses engaged in tourism related businesses (e.g., lodging, restaurants, marinas, etc.)

The VTC Market Leverage Program application period for 2024 opens on February 8, 2024 and closes on March 14, 2024. Mr. Holt will meet with Ms. Sharpe of Historic Downtown Tappahannock to discuss the details of the program and the application process.

Facade Grant Applications:

None pending.

Historic Downtown Tappahannock (HDT):

Ms. Sharpe updated the EDA on the gift card program that is kicking off on Saturday, February 4, 2024. There is a lot of interest from small businesses about the program, some of which are outside the district covered by the program.

She also noted that HDT also has developed an “app” available for mobile phones. The app provides information on shopping, dining, recreation, walking tours and much more.

The Farmers’ market is just around the corner and this year will have some logistical issues with sewer work taking place in the first few months.

The Small Business Forum will take place on March 25, 2024 from 8:30am to 10:30am at the Firehouse and will be focused on social media. A representative from CANVA – a free online and out based program that helps business boost social media graphics.

Laura Messer will be hosting the Essex Business Forum on June 3, 2024 from 8:30am to 10:30am. That meeting will focus on the Small Business Marketing Leverage program which will open up the following month.

EDA Website:

Messrs. Smith and Holt with the technical aide of Mr. Huntley from the IT department provided a presentation on the enhancements of the EDA area of the Essex County website. The presentation was mostly focused on the “look and feel” of the site. The mocked up content slides will be sent to EDA members.

Board of Supervisors:

There has been an organizational meeting of the Board and leadership remains the same for 2024. Next official Board meeting will be in February. Right now the budget is the top item.

Chamber of Commerce:

Mr. Croxton reported that the next meeting will be at Roma’s on February 27, 2024 at 5:00.

Zoning:

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

RE: NEW BUSINESS

The EDA was invited to a meeting with Town of Tappahannock and representatives of the EDA. Due to the large number of attendees to the meeting, minutes were required for the EDA and are attached to these minutes.

RE: CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made that the EDA go into closed session to discuss personnel matters. The motion was seconded and approved. Ayes 6, Nays 0 (one member had left the meeting).

At the conclusion of the meeting the EDA reconvened the open meeting.

RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 9:00AM.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn and seconded. All Ayes

Secretary, David Holt