

Economic Development

Vacant
Economic Development Director

202 South Church Lane
P.O. Box 1079
Tappahannock, Virginia 22560
www.essex-virginia.org



Established 1692

Economic Development Authority

William A. Croxton, Chair
Robert Hodges
Randy Shuford
Tim Smith
Jamie Segar
Reese Peck

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Sydney Johnson, Chairman
Essex County Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Roy M. Gladding, Mayor
Town of Tappahannock

Gentlemen:

In this competitive world a community cannot grow without committing resources, tools and people to economic development. To this end the newly seated EDA laid out a road map to sustain the economic development momentum we experienced in 2020 in the attached resolution "Essex County's Economic Development Foundation for the Future."

The "Foundation for the Future" resolution calls for developing a dedicated funding source for economic development, hiring professional staff, and developing business incentives. Note one component of this foundation has already in place -the recent accreditation of our Main Street Program and the selection of Beth Sharpe as its executive director.

Attached for your consideration is a copy of Resolution #21-01 adopted January 13, 2021. Remember economic development in its simplest terms is about growing our tax base and improving our quality of life.

Sincerely,

William Croxton, Chairman
Essex County Economic Development Authority

CC: Michael Lombardo, Essex County Administrator
Eric Pollitt, Tappahannock Town Manager
Beth Sharpe, Executive Director Tappahannock Main Street
Essex County Board of Supervisors
Tappahannock Town Council

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Resolution #21-01

ESSEX COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE REQUEST

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Authority of Essex County, Virginia was created by the ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors of Essex County, Virginia (the "Board of Supervisors") on September 13, 1983, and in compliance with the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act, currently found in the provisions of §§ 15.2-4900 et. seq. of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended. The 1983 ordinance established the Industrial Development Authority of Essex County. The name was changed to the Economic Development Authority of Essex County, Virginia (EDA) by ordinance adopted February 11, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the EDA is to promote economic development, support industry, and develop trade by inducing manufacturing, industrial, governmental, nonprofit and commercial enterprises to locate in or remain in Essex County and Virginia and to further the use of its agricultural products and natural resources, and all other purposes as are now or may hereafter be set forth in the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act, Chapter 49, Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended (the "Act"); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors in their *Vision, Mission and Initiative* statement, posted on the County's Transparency Portal, adopted four strategic initiatives, and an action agenda for implementing the initiatives. Briefly, the strategic initiatives are to first, foster community and economic well-being; second, to practice good governance; third, to strengthen community partnerships; and finally, to fund the future; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative statement calls for adopt an economic development strategy for Essex County inclusive of an implementation schedule and incorporate, where appropriate, key economic development goals and objectives in the county's operational and capital budgets and expand broadband throughout the county; and

WHEREAS, at the request of the Essex County EDA, the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) through its Cardinal Community Assistance Program (CCAP) agreed to review the Town's and County's economic conditions, review past and current economic development strategies and suggest strategies for economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the CCAP recommended that Essex County focus on some of the basics of economic development. And that at minimum, the budget needs to be increased and a long-term commitment made in order to effectively engage in today's world of community development. They also stressed, a prospect team needs to be assembled, assigned tasks, coached, rehearsed and be made ready whenever a prospect comes to town. The captain and project manager of the team needs to be the **Director of Economic Development**; and

WHEREAS, the CCAP also recommended that Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock secure public river access and improve road access to the "old airport" property; and

WHEREAS, In April 2020, Governor Ralph Northam signed the **Virginia Clean Economy Act** (SB 851/HB 1526) and the **Solar Freedom Act** (SB 710/HB 572). This new legislation requires the state's two largest utilities to steadily increase the percentage of renewable energy use year by year and eventually become 100% carbon free. Dominion Energy (Dominion) is required to procure 41% carbon free by 2030 and 100% by 2045. For Appalachian Power (APCo), the requirement is 30% carbon free by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and

WHEREAS, to achieve this mandate, Dominion is required to purchase 16,100 MW of solar photovoltaic energy (solar PV) or onshore wind by 2035. Of that amount, 200 MW is required to be on previously developed project sites, such as abandoned mines, brownfields, or parking lots. Dominion must also derive at least 1% of its energy from in-state solar distributed generation of which at least 25% is from qualified low-income systems. APCo is required to purchase 600 MW of solar or onshore wind by 2030; and

WHEREAS, other legislation adopted in 2020 in regard to solar farm development provides new options for local governments to include special compensation requirements from developers. One of these laws (HB 1675) allows developers to negotiate a siting agreement with a locality in areas that are "opportunity zones." A community can negotiate a siting agreement that includes financial compensation even if it is not directly related to the project, including mitigation of project impacts, addressing capital needs, and *assistance with broadband deployment*; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's *Guide Book for Local Officials* stresses that the internet is an essential marketing mechanism, a local economic development website is mandatory; and

WHEREAS, local incentive programs are necessary component of economic development programs; and

WHEREAS, §58.1-3245.8 of the Code of Virginia provides for the establishment of Local Enterprise Zones and §58.1-3245.10 of the Code of Virginia addresses the use of funds generated within Local Enterprise Zones; and

WHEREAS, the Essex County Economic Development Authority (EDA) believes the establishment of Local Enterprise Zones represents a strong commitment to dedicated sources of revenue to support governmental services and grants to economic development entities to be used within established zones; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Tappahannock has been authorized to impose excise taxes on meals under charter provisions granting them the general power of taxation; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Tappahannock has a high number of transient visitors who consume meals here.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Economic Development Authority of Essex County this 6th day of January 2021,

requests the Essex County Board of Supervisors and the Tappahannock Town Council take the following steps to create our ***Foundation for the Future***:

1. the vacant full time county Economic Development Director position be filled,
2. Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock jointly annually appropriate \$50,000 to the Economic Development Authority to fund economic development activities and local incentive programs to begin in fiscal 2021,
3. Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock continue to jointly fund the Main Street Program,
4. the Town of Tappahannock increase their meals tax 1% and dedicate the revenues for economic development purposes,

5. Essex County establish Local Enterprise Zones for the "old airport" property and LaGrange Industrial Park and dedicate the revenues generated to the development of such Zones,
6. Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock jointly develop modern interactive economic development web sites,
7. Essex County explore developing a dedicated economic development revenue stream authorized under HB 1675,
8. Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock actively market the fact we have a designated Opportunity Zones.
9. Essex County, the Town of Tappahannock and the Essex County Economic Development Authority hold a joint meeting to establish annual economic development benchmarks.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following projects serve as the near-term objectives for our ***Foundation for the Future***:

1. Support implementation of county wide 1 Gbps broadband access, to include serving as Essex County's Wireless Service Authority, to address infrastructure and fiber to the home funding requirements.
2. Develop a SmartScale application to increase access to the "old airport" property and to solve the school bus safety issue on Route 17,
3. Support county and town efforts to secure multiple public access points and venues to the Rappahannock River to complement on-going revitalization efforts,
4. Support efforts to develop the "Old Airport" property and Lagrange Industrial Park to meet State "pad-ready" certification,
5. Support Tappahannock Main Street efforts to revitalize Main Street designated area of Tappahannock,
6. Based on Tappahannock Main Street design and specific vitality initiatives establish complementary county efforts for future efforts,
7. Secure a major retailer for the closed Gordmans site, and
8. Develop incentives plans that encourages new businesses, reinvigorates established businesses and is adaptable to economic and political changes over time.

ADOPTED: This 13th day of January 2021.

CERTIFICATION OF ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION

The undersigned Secretary of the Economic Development Authority (EDA) of Essex County, Virginia hereby certifies that the Resolution set forth above was duly adopted during open meeting on January 13, 2021, by a majority of the members of the EDA at a regular meeting with the following votes:


Aye: Croxton, Hodges, Peck, Seger, Shurford, Smith


Nay: None

Abstentions: None

Signed this 13th day of January 2021.

ATTEST


 Randy Shuford, Secretary
 Essex County Economic Development Authority


 William Croxton, Chairman
 Essex County Economic Development Authority