



Anthony DeStefano, Chair

CALVERT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Courthouse, 175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678
410-535-1600
www.ecalvert.com

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Calvert County Economic Development Commission Minutes Wednesday, March 8, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dawn Balinski, Tony DeStefano, Charles Cox, Susan Cox and Shawn Gageby

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ed Baddour, Bill Chambers, Bill Gaines, Tom Hejl, Ray Mahar*, Varkey Matthew, Chris Moore*, Carrie Polk*, Mark Willis and David Weigel

GUESTS: Mary Beth Cook, Community Planning and Building; Chris McNelis and Julie Fuller, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices; Steve Wall, Maryland Dept. of Commerce

STAFF: Danita Boonchaisri, Jessica Requilman and Mark Volland

***Excused Absence**

Chair Tony DeStefano called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

Due to a lack of quorum the meeting's agenda was not approved.

Approval of Minutes

Due to a lack of quorum approval of the minutes from the January Economic Development Commission (EDC) meeting was deferred to the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Chris McNelis/PBP Broker Presentation

Chris McNelis gave an overview of the Patuxent Business Park (PBP) website created by Mark Volland (www.ecalvert.com/230/Patuxent-Business-Park). The website includes an interactive site map that shows details for each site including price and acreage. Currently, two of the 14 sites at PBP have been sold.

McNelis provided EDC members with an excerpt from the corporate documents for PBP that listed all the prohibited uses. Dawn Balinski asked what the process for amending the list of covenants would be and if it would be difficult. McNelis responded the list consisted of state requirements and could be changed through a PBP-specific text amendment. Danita Boonchaisri added that when looking at amendments to the list of covenants, the county wanted to refrain from turning PBP into a heavy-use industrial park, which was not the original vision. Boonchaisri stated the prohibited uses for PBP have been relaxed over the years, and no interested buyer is turned away immediately.

McNelis recently joined Patuxent Partnership, a powerful group of business owners who support the defense industry at Patuxent River, located in St. Mary's County. McNelis added she and Linda Vassallo would be meeting with the director of Patuxent Partnership in the coming weeks.

McNelis explained that business owners are looking to locate near the St. Mary's naval base. She added she has offered to fast track permits for potential site buyers. Boonchaisri has suggested noting PBP sites as "shovel ready" to assure potential buyers that their needs can be met quickly.

The PBP website features an aerial video of the sites and surrounding areas. McNelis mentioned the close proximity of the Chesapeake Hills Golf Course is a selling point.

DeStefano stated potential buyers may be discouraged by the list of prohibited businesses at PBP. He added that a list of renderings would be more helpful. McNelis responded that a large screen of an attractive office building has been placed at the entrance of PBP to entice business owners. McNelis added the list of prohibited uses is not the first document sent to clients, but it is an important part of the discussion for the EDC.

Susan Cox suggested that there be ways for people to navigate around the list of prohibited uses by using their "human element." She explained that sharing ideas with the community increases the likelihood that a business idea is accepted. McNelis responded that she has worked closely with leads to find ways around the list of covenants. She added that marketing with human testimonials will help reach the community in a personal way.

DeStefano suggested an office building with rentable space located in PBP offered at rates lower than offices in St. Mary's County would be successful. McNelis responded that this discussion has been held with the State of Maryland several times and she agreed that this type of space would do well.

Balinski asked about the difference between Class A, B and C office space. McNelis responded that different classes represented age. For example, Class A properties are newer, more modern spaces with updated wiring and systems within the structure. McNelis added that it is possible to take a Class C site to a Class A.

Volland gave an overview of the PBP portion of the ECalvert.com website. He explained that the PBP and ECalvert websites were combined so viewers would not need to go back and forth between the two. There are several downloadable resources for interested site buyers. Volland played the aerial video of PBP for the EDC and encouraged members to view all the available online resources. Volland explained the website also features an interactive map that allows viewers to see specific lot information. Boonchaisri added this tool allows interested buyers to easily view the demographics for PBP. She stated that Economic Development staff plans to reach out directly to site selectors to ensure PBP is being considered when shortlists are made. McNelis added that PBP is featured on Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices (BHHS) website in several locations.

McNelis explained the Facebook page for PBP will be going live shortly. Discussions are being held between the Department of Economic Development and BHHS to determine who will handle social media for PBP. She added that her focus is changing the face of PBP, getting a marketing plan implemented, linking the marketing plan to business owners and appealing to the defense sector at Patuxent River.

Charles Cox expressed concern over the lack of a specific audience for PBP. Cox explained that it seemed as though the market for PBP is still being established. He said it needs to be decided who the most cost-effective target audience for the park will be. Cox stated that although PBP is an ideal location for businesses looking to locate near Patuxent River, there are few other selling points for this audience. He suggested that to make the lots more appealing to potential buyers, we begin prepping the sites for construction by clearing trees. Cox finished by saying that we need to show progress at PBP and define what type of businesses we want to fill the park. McNelis agreed with Cox's comments, adding that PBP will likely end up being a blend of office and light industrial space. She added she would like to see progress on lots #7 or #8 since they can be viewed from the roadway. McNelis stated this will require funds and allowance from the state. She added that Linda Vassallo has been in close contact with the state regarding lot sales at PBP.

McNelis commented that there has been limited activity related to PBP over the last 10 years. Steve Wall commented that when PBP was developed, St. Mary's County was simultaneously developing property. Wall added that it will be difficult to convince defense contractors to purchase space at PBP rather than in St. Mary's County due to a longer commute and the added complication of the Thomas Johnson bridge. Wall added there have been several complications over the years that have prevented PBP from developing, and he hopes Dominion will be the starting point to continued growth there.

McNelis stated she believes there is more attention on PBP recently than there has been in previous years. She added we have a governor and staff who are very interested in this type of development. McNelis added that with the potential increase in military spending, she hopes buyers will look at PBP as an option and see the amenities it has to offer, such as the golf course across the street. Wall stated he believes McNelis understands PBP well and he has heard good feedback.

Dawn Balinski inquired if there was broadband at PBP. McNelis responded that the park has Verizon and Comcast fiber, natural gas and water/sewer.

DeStefano stated he would like the EDC to receive updates on how PBP is progressing. McNelis responded that the next time she presents to the EDC, she will go into more detail on how BHHS is using social media to market PBP.

B. 2017 Business Appreciation Week

Boonchaisri stated Business Appreciation Week (BAW) will be held May 1-5 this year with a focus on agriculture. She added that on May 2, teams will visit 15 ag-related businesses. The week's activities will include a reception, women's round table and Business After Hours at Davis, Upton and Palumbo.

C. Ratify Vote on Text Amendment #16-08

Due to a lack of a quorum the vote for Text Amendment #16-08 was not ratified.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Strategic Plan Update Status

Boonchaisri stated that the strategic plan is due from economist Anirban Basu on March 10 and the department looks forward to receiving his report. Once received, it will be presented to the EDC.

B. Ethics Form Reminder

DeStefano reminded members to turn in their ethics forms to Lisa Tolomei before March 31.

C. 2017 Calvert County Restaurant Week Recap

Volland stated the Calvert County Restaurant Week ran Feb. 17-26; 29 restaurants participated in the event. Volland added the program was overseen by Katie Brittain of the DED, who ran several Facebook and radio contests. Advertisements were also placed in local newspapers. Volland closed by saying this was the 5th annual Restaurant Week and the event was very successful. This event provides advertising for local restaurants during their off season as well as entices out-of-county restaurant goers to visit the area. Volland stated participating restaurants are given a comment card which helps determine event success. DeStefano stated he was unable to leave feedback online during restaurant week, and suggested using QR codes in advertising next year. Volland added that each restaurant gets a variety of advertising materials including comment cards with QR codes. He added that DED encourages restaurants to use the materials provided to them.

UPDATES

A. Dominion

Boonchaisri stated that the Dominion project is on schedule. They are currently 84 percent complete and are planning to begin operations in December 2017. Dominion hopes to be in their PBP warehouse by the end of the month. Boonchaisri added that when Dominion located to the back of PBP, they put in gas, electrical and cable lines making it easier for other businesses to locate within PBP.

B. Maryland Broadband

Boonchaisri stated that the bay crossing is nearing completion.

C. Armory Square

Boonchaisri explained that DED is working with site developers on designs for Armory Square and the project is moving forward.

NEXT MEETING

DeStefano recommended that a meeting be held Wednesday, April 12, 2017, due to a lack of quorum at this meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Mary Beth Cook stated the sign regulations are currently being reviewed and are estimated to go to public comment in early May.
- DeStefano encouraged new members to look over the EDC subcommittee options and determine which committee they would like to join.
- Balinski asked that a representative from DED and Community Planning and Building attend a meeting regarding the 203(k) Loan Program.
- Balinski inquired if there was a date when the Comcast renegotiations would be finalized. Volland responded that there is not currently a date. A public hearing will be held but a date has not been set yet.
- Shawn Gageby informed the EDC the town of Chesapeake Beach has a newly formed Economic Development Commission.

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ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the EDC the meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.