



# CALVERT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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*Board of Commissioners*  
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*Anthony DeStefano, Chair*

## Calvert County Economic Development Commission Minutes Wednesday, September 13, 2017

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dawn Balinski, Bob Carpenter, Tony DeStefano, Shawn Gageby, Tom Hejl, Ray Mahar and Carrie Polk
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ed Baddour, Susan Cox\*, Charles Cox, William Gaines\*, David Weigel
- GUESTS:** Mary Beth Cook, Planning and Zoning; Steve Wall, Maryland Dept. of Commerce; Britany Waddell, Planning and Zoning
- STAFF:** Danita Boonchaisri, Wendy Rawlings and Kelly Robertson-Slagle

### **\*Excused Absence**

Chair Tony DeStefano called the meeting to order at 8:38 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 minutes from the June 21, 2017 combined meeting was not conducted.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. PeakeNet Broadband Service in Southern MD**

Nick Stewart was not able to attend the EDC meeting. Kelly Robertson-Slagle gave members an overview of PeakeNet Broadband Service. While originally from Charles County, PeakeNet wireless internet service is currently active in Calvert County. PeakeNet is a line-of-sight service that will require the use of cell towers. Mr. Stewart is currently negotiating with several entities for access to these higher elevated cell towers to see if it is possible to design a wireless network. As of November 1, he will be lighting up the system. There are currently 67 clients in Calvert County and he is willing to speak to anyone interested in the service. If a client falls outside the system and there are additional design needs, there will be no additional cost to customers. Robertson-Slagle recommended that clients of EDC members who may be in need of broadband service reach out to Mr. Stewart. Tony DeStefano requested contact information for Mr. Stewart. Robertson-Slagle recommended EDC members visit [www.peakenetbroadband.com](http://www.peakenetbroadband.com) to view information about the pricing structure and a map where service is available.

#### **B. Job Fair**

Robertson-Slagle updated the EDC on the 12th annual job fair hosted by the Calvert County Department of Economic Development. The fair is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 28, 2017, at the College of Maryland Relay for Impaired Hearing or Speech: 1-800-735-2258

Southern Maryland Prince Frederick campus from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. There are currently 21 businesses registered to participate. This is a partnership event that includes the College of Southern Maryland, Calvert County Chamber of Commerce and the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland. The event is free for businesses and attendees. Robertson-Slagle encouraged EDC members to spread the word and provided fliers to each member. This year, there has been a high interest for businesses outside of Calvert County to attend. These businesses will have the opportunity to provide a written description of employment opportunities which will be posted on a bulletin board for job-seekers to view. Tables are reserved for Calvert businesses only. The Mobile Career Center bus will be available in the parking lot and Mike Benton will offer mini workshops throughout the day. Dawn Balinski suggested that a representative for the FH 203 loan program be offered a table at the job fair. She will email the contact information to Robertson-Slagle for the DED to follow-up.

### **C. Economic Development Business Survey**

Robertson-Slagle distributed a copy of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) memo summarizing the results of the survey. This is a bi-annual survey sent via first-class mail to over 5,000 businesses. Returned postcards are used to update the business database. There is a 3-level check for all businesses prior to removal from the database. The online survey captured answers to 46 questions about a variety of topics such as workforce, industry growth and the economy. There were 138 responses and most seemed positive about the economy. Common recommendations in the open comments section included an automated permitting system, affordable workforce housing options, a reduction in regulations and increased traffic on Route 4. This feedback was provided to Department Heads.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Calvert County Government Restructure & Staffing Changes**

#### **1. Update on Department of Economic Development**

Robertson-Slagle updated members on recent structural and staff changes for the DED. Effective July 1, the department was split creating the Department of Communications and Media Relations which is under the direction of Linda Vassallo. Robertson-Slagle was promoted to Director of Economic Development. Danita Boonchaisri, Business Development Manager, is serving as second-in-command and assisting with the Business Retention program until staffing is in place. Katie Brittain and Jennifer Pettko were promoted to Tourism Specialist and Agricultural Marketing Specialist, respectively.

The DED will continue to manage the Solomons Visitor Center which will be launching a store. The store is not meant to compete with any other retail facilities in Solomons. Its purpose is to alleviate expenses of the visitors center and provide tourists with mementos from their visit to Calvert County.

Physically, the DED is now on the right side of the second floor of the Courthouse Square Building while the Department of Communications and Media Relations remains on the left. Kathy MacAdams, counselor for the SBDC, now has an office just outside the main entrance of Courthouse Square on the lower level that is still under construction. Robertson-Slagle invited members to stop in after the move is complete.

#### **2. Update on Consolidation of the Commissions (EDC, TAC, AG)**

Robertson-Slagle updated the EDC on its consolidation with the Calvert County Tourism Advisory Commission and Calvert County Agricultural Commission. Today is the last meeting for the EDC. She is in the final process of working with County Attorney John Norris on a resolution which will dissolve the three Commissions and create a new Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDAC). The creation of EDAC is based on staff recommendation, as well as a recommendation in the five-year strategic plan update, and will consist of a variety of members across industry sectors. Staff is currently creating an application for membership on the EDAC which should be available in late October. Membership applications will be open for 4-6 weeks. Applicants must be operating a business in Calvert County; further requirements are currently being discussed. Robertson-Slagle encouraged EDC members to apply.

#### **B. Strategic Plan (2017-2022)**

Robertson-Slagle briefed the EDC on the five-year strategic plan update given by Anirban Basu of the Sage Policy Group. Mr. Basu is a well-known economist contracted by the County; he presented an update on Aug. 29, 2017. The presentation is available on the Calvert County Government website. Basu's critical findings were: rapidly aging population and out-migration of retirees, dearth of in-migration of younger families and workers, smallish town centers and uncertainty regarding future Federal budgeting. Major opportunities include: Dominion expansion with Cove Point Liquefaction Facility and on-going employment. Strategic recommendations moving forward include: massively accelerating development of town centers, massively increasing incentives for agri-businesses including vineyards and farm-to-table operations and creating the Economic Development Advisory Commission (EDAC). In addition to setting up the EDAC, staff requested success matrices that would allow DED to work with the EDAC to set benchmarks. Robertson-Slagle encouraged EDC members to view the presentation on the Calvert County Government website and view the full strategic plan on the Economic Development website.

#### **C. Sign Regulation Update**

Mary Beth Cook gave an update on sign regulations. There was a joint public hearing on Aug. 22, 2017. The Planning Commission and BOCC voted to leave the record open for a month to accept public comments. Comments will be accepted in writing until close of business on Sept. 21, 2017. Staff is also willing to meet with any groups which have questions. Planning and Zoning hosted a meeting at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) last night and will host another meeting tomorrow at Calvert Marine Museum at 7 p.m. Approximately 20-25 people attended the meeting at CSM. Common questions proposed were regarding size and temporary signage. Comments will be provided to the Planning Commission at their October meeting. Their recommendation will then be presented to the BOCC. Depending on the recommendation of the Planning Commission, a resolution could potentially be complete by November 1.

### **UPDATES**

#### **A. Armory Square**

Commissioner Hejl reported that the county is in discussion with another set of developers and they have presented a concept to the county attorney. In addition, the county attorney has another scheduled meeting with the Peterson Group.

#### **B. Patuxent Business Park**

Danita Boonchaisri gave an update on the Patuxent Business Park. The DED is working with the McNelis Group for this project. There are new prospects and they will be reengaging with several former clients. There seems to be a strong interest in Calvert County by national chains, franchisees and

franchisors, and business owners. Hejl commented that the change in climate and increased interest in the business community in Calvert County is a result of the new direction by the current BOCC.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- Britany Waddell, Deputy Director for the Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning, introduced herself to the EDC. Before beginning the position with Calvert County last week, she worked for George Washington University for the past 10 years as Director of Community Relations where she handled campus planning implementation and stakeholder engagement. Prior to that, she was a municipal planner in North Carolina for 4 years.
- Calvert County Ethics Guides were distributed to members. Forms will still need to be completed by members.
- DeStefano and Robertson-Slagle thanked the members for their service.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the EDC, the meeting was adjourned at 9:51 a.m.