



# CALVERT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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*Board of Commissioners*  
Mike Hart  
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Pat Nutter  
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Steven R. Weems

*Anthony DeStefano, Chair*

## Calvert County Economic Development Commission Minutes Wednesday, April 12, 2017

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ed Baddour, Dawn Balinski, Tony DeStefano, Charles Cox, Susan Cox, Shawn Gageby, Tom Hejl, Ray Mahar and Carrie Polk
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bill Gaines, Varkey Matthew, Mark Willis and David Weigel
- GUESTS:** Mary Beth Cook, Community Planning and Building; Steve Wall, Maryland Dept. of Commerce
- STAFF:** Danita Boonchaisri, Jessica Requilman and Linda Vassallo

### **\*Excused Absence**

Chair Tony DeStefano called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

### **Approval of Agenda**

With a quorum, DeStefano asked Economic Development Commission (EDC) members to review the April 12, 2017, meeting agenda for approval. A **motion** was made by Carrie Polk to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion was seconded by Shawn Gageby and carried.

### **Approval of Minutes**

With a quorum, DeStefano asked EDC members to review the Jan. 11, 2017, and March 8, 2017, meeting minutes for approval. A **motion** was made by Polk to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Gageby and carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. 2017 Business Appreciation Week**

Linda Vassallo explained this year's Business Appreciation Week will focus on the agriculture and aquaculture community. She stated the press release for the event will be released shortly. The kickoff event will be held on May 2, 2017, after the commissioners and ambassador teams complete their site visits, rather than Monday, due to feedback received about condensing events during the week. Ambassador teams are currently being finalized. Vassallo added the event improves each year and she looks forward to this year's activities.

#### **B. Ratify Vote on Text Amendment #16-08**

Dawn Balinski made a **motion** to ratify Text Amendment No. 16-08. The motion was seconded by Polk and carried.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Strategic Plan Update Status**

Vassallo informed the EDC she met with the Small Business Interest Group early in the week and briefed them on the status of the strategic plan. She stated she currently has a draft of the strategic plan that will be reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) before being released publicly. Vassallo added the plan covers issues the EDC has discussed including the growth of Calvert County's town centers and the potential expansion of boundaries. She noted there were some specific comments regarding the need for infrastructure in the town centers throughout the county. There was an added emphasis on agritourism and ecotourism.

Vassallo explained she asked the plan's consultant, Anirban Basu of the Sage Policy Group, to review the EDC, Tourism Advisory Commission (TAC) and Agricultural Commission and how they interact with each other. Basu recommended there be an Economic Development Advisory Board, combining EDC, TAC, and Agriculture Commission. This will allow the voices of each group to be heard simultaneously. Vassallo reported the commissions have been having unified meetings to vote and discuss text amendments and they have been successful in streamlining the process as well as ensuring that the positions of each group are heard. Vassallo stated her recommendation to the BOCC will be to restructure and merge the three commissions. She added a combined meeting will be set at a later date to discuss this restructure in more detail.

Danita Boonchaisri commented that Basu's report included a large amount of demographic analysis information. Vassallo stated that Basu complimented Calvert County's Economic Development and Business Retention programs. She added that the overall goals of Calvert County have remained similar over the last 15 years and the goals have not been strong due to a lack of public participation. Basu provided feedback on how to improve the goals for a better outcome.

Vassallo stated Basu was given data on why people aren't locating to Calvert County, with the top reasons being the availability of property, the availability of space and lack of financing. Vassallo noted the lack of industrial and town center property makes it difficult to locate large clients to Calvert County.

Balinski stated there was a large turnout during the strategic plan meeting at the College of Southern Maryland and inquired how this was achieved. Vassallo responded that invitations were sent out to Calvert County's major employers across industries as well as members of the EDC, TAC and Agricultural Commission. Balinski expressed interest in having representatives from Calvert County's major employers attend an EDC meeting. Vassallo responded that Economic Development stays in regular communication with representatives from the area's major employers.

DeStefano added it would be beneficial to meet with a similar group before making major developmental changes to Calvert County's town centers to get a proper read on the community's thoughts. Vassallo stated that several representatives from the area's major employers are on the Small Business Interest Group. She added that restructuring the commissions may allow for a greater opportunity for members to speak with major employers.

### **B. Sign Regulation Update**

Mary Beth Cook reported the sign regulation update is nearing completion. Once the final draft of the update is reviewed by the county attorney a public hearing will be scheduled. The hearing is expected to take place by the end of May or early June.

### **C. Patuxent Business Park Update**

Vassallo informed the EDC that the Dominion building at Patuxent Business Park (PBP) will have their final permits very soon. Ed Baddour asked what the staff size for the building will be. Vassallo responded that the building's staff size is undecided. She stated the EDC will be able to tour both the liquefied natural gas facility and Dominion's new building in the upcoming weeks. Steve Wall asked if a formal ribbon cutting will be held at the new building and Vassallo stated there are plans to host an event.

Vassallo stated Economic Development is working with a second client for PBP. The state of Maryland has offered the company financing options. Vassallo is currently waiting for a final decision from the company. She stated the price of property at PBP is the main setback for potential clients. Brokerage companies Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices and Sperry Van Ness have been more successful than previous brokers in advertising the area. Chris McNelis is handling the local expansion market while Sperry Van Ness is handling advertising on a national scale.

## **UPDATES**

### **A. Dominion**

Vassallo explained a public hearing will be held regarding a permit modification with the Maryland Department of the Environment for Offsite Area 'A'. This will convert a temporary use permit for a bridge to a permanent use permit. Originally, this bridge was planned for removal at the end of the Dominion project with the land being restored to its natural state. However, during an open session with the BOCC, Dominion offered to donate 100 acres of land to the county for public open space and recreational use. This was approved by the BOCC, which also requested proper permitting be obtained.

Balinski stated that during a Natural Resources strategic plan meeting, it was said Dominion would be putting ball fields and a concession stand in the donated space to replace the areas at Cove Point Park. Vassallo explained Cove Point Park will not be closing and this area will not compete with the existing park. Commission Tom Hejl agreed. No official decisions of how the land will be used have been made at this time.

Vassallo informed the EDC Dominion is currently at peak capacity on temporary labor, at 3,000 workers. Dominion will begin to scale back on this number as temporary contracts end. By this summer, it's estimated the workforce will lower to about 1,800. This number will continue to decrease and will leave Dominion with 600-700 workers by November. Vassallo expressed concern about Solomons and Lusby businesses which are currently thriving. She explained that Economic Development will be adjusting their marketing plan to do tourism advertising to bring consumers to this area.

Dominion is approximately 86% complete and is scheduled to be in service by December 17, 2017. Steve Wall inquired if the recent fracking legislation passed in Maryland would hinder Dominion's process. Vassallo responded this would not impact Dominion on an operational standpoint.

### **B. Maryland Broadband**

Vassallo reported that Maryland Broadband is nearing completion of the Cove Point Lighthouse crossing. Baddour questioned what benefit this new installment will have for Calvert County. Vassallo responded that with the completion of the loop, additional internet service providers (ISP) will be able to join Maryland Broadband and provide service. Vassallo added that once the project is complete she will be looking for interested internet service providers. Comcast is a member of Maryland Broadband, so the completion of the project may allow them to expand their service areas.

Balinski asked who would be managing Maryland Broadband's website once the project is complete and expressed concern over the underserved areas having access to internet services. Vassallo stated that additional nodes in underserved areas were to be put in place during the project to make the ISP expansion simpler. Vassallo announced that Tyler Patton would attend the June EDC meeting to discuss further details.

### **C. Armory Square**

- Vassallo stated she is waiting for information from State Highway to come back regarding Armory Square and the expansion of Route 4. The two developers she is working with are finalizing information to present to the BOCC. Vassallo explained the project is slowly moving forward and more information will be available in the coming weeks.

Balinski informed the EDC she received the school enrollment projections for the five-year facility plan and was disappointed to see the numbers mostly at a standstill for the next 10 years. She inquired if there was upcoming residential development. Hejl stated there was, and that enrollment numbers should change in the next two years. He explained there is an upcoming project for two residential areas in Prince Frederick. One area will be upscale apartment rentals geared toward attracting young adults. The second area will be a mixed area of townhouses and residential buildings for sale. Hejl explained that Armory Square will be a mix of residential and commercial areas as well as open space.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next EDC meeting will be held Wednesday, June 14, 2017.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- DeStefano reminded the EDC members Business Appreciation Week will be held May 1-5.
- DeStefano requested a legislative update at the next EDC meeting.
- Baddour requested a representative from North Beach be present at the next EDC meeting.
- Wall explained a leasing project at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station recently fell through, which could lead to an influx of clients looking for space in Calvert County.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the EDC a **motion** to adjourn was made by Balinski at 9:32 a.m. The motion was seconded by Polk and carried.