



**CALVERT COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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Board of Commissioners
Mike Hart
Tom Hejl
Pat Nutter
Evan K. Slaughenhaupt Jr.
Steven R. Weems

Anthony DeStefano, Chair

**Joint Commission Meeting
Calvert County Agriculture Commission (AC)
Calvert County Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Calvert County Tourism Advisory Commission (TAC)
Minutes
Wednesday, June 21, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

AC: Susan Cox, Earl Hance, Dave Warner

EDC: Dawn Balinski, Bob Carpenter, Susan Cox, Tony DeStefano, Bill Gaines, Tom Hejl, Carrie Polk

TAC: Linda Canfield, Bob Carpenter, Pamela Jones, Kim Meekyung, Anne Sundermann, Vandy Young, John Hartline

MEMBERS ABSENT:

AC: John Behun, Catherine Cosgrove*, Mark Cox, Gary Entzian, William Kreamer, Craig Mask*, Herb Reed, Jamie Tiralla, Caroline Trossbach

EDC: Ed Baddour, Charles Cox*, Shawn Gageby*, Ray Mahar*, Varkey Matthew, David Weigel

TAC: Jack Fringer*, Pat Nutter, Stacey Hann-Ruff*, Erin Knowles, Shirley Schreffler*, Larry Wilson

GUESTS: Mary Beth Cook, Planning and Zoning

STAFF: Sandy Bentley, Danita Boonchaisri, Jennifer Pettko, Kelly Robertson-Slagle, Linda Vassallo

***Excused Absence**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Linda Vassallo called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

II. CALL FOR AGENDA REVISIONS

There were no revisions to the agenda.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Calvert County Government Restructure

Vassallo informed the group that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) tasked Deputy County Administrator Wilson Parran with analyzing county government operations. The analysis resulted in a

recommendation to split the Department of the Economic Development (DED) into two departments: Economic Development and Communications and Media Relations (CMR).

DED will continue to conduct business retention, business development, tourism and agricultural marketing. Vassallo will be the director of CMR but will continue to fill both director roles until a new DED director is appointed. Vassallo will continue to be available to assist the business community.

B. Joint Commission Strategic Plan

Vassallo reminded the group that the county engaged Economist Anirban Basu to complete a review of the DED's strategic plan. As part of this review, Basu was asked to evaluate and make recommendations regarding DED's commission structure. This request was based on the success of the EDC industry cluster meetings and the joint text amendment subcommittee. Basu recommended combining the existing commissions to create one economic advisory board.

After discussion, the group agreed members benefited from the cross dialogue and sharing of ideas that occurred at joint committee meetings.

Cox expressed appreciation to the DED and BOCC for recognizing citizens have valuable input and for acknowledging the benefits of relationship building in the county.

Vassallo stated that DED staff spends approximately 70 staff hours a month related to managing commissions. The proposed economic advisory board will allow the staff to allocate more focused time and attention to the new board. She stated this change will allow the newly formed board to achieve great things.

Dawn Balinski asked if the number of EDC members would be restricted. Vassallo stated that a well-functioning board has approximately 15 members. She expects some people to step back from their commission seat during this transition, but wants all current members to have a place on the new board, if they desire.

Balinski and DeStefano suggested alternating terms and adding term limits to the new board. DeStefano suggested creating an attendance policy. If members don't adhere to the attendance policy, then they will lose their seat on the board.

Vassallo added that she would like each of the existing committees to have equal presence on the new board. She hopes that the creation of a new joint board will provide increased momentum and give the business community a broader and bigger voice with the BOCC. Vassallo suggested creating an annual board assessment survey to get input from board members on the level of support provided by DED.

Anne Sundermann inquired about the internal structure of the new board. Vassallo stated the board will continue to have subcommittees.

John Hartline asked if there would be a Naval Air Station Patuxent River representative on the new board or a mechanism for communication since there is a large number of Calvert County citizens who are employed

by NAS Patuxent River. Vassallo responded that she isn't sure that would be appropriate, but that Calvert County has representatives on base boards/commissions and the base has a presence on some Calvert County boards. She added that a requirement of board members is that they are voting citizens of Calvert County.

Hejl offered that we would be lucky to get five interested members from each existing commission. The vacancies on the majority of commissions outnumber the filled spaces. It's also hard for citizens to take time away from their jobs to attend meetings.

Earl Hance added that the key to having active members on a board is for members to feel like the meetings are important and that it is a good use of their time.

Cox added that members of the new board have a responsibility to act as community ambassadors to carry our message and information to the citizens and bring feedback to the BOCC. She suggested that members need to be trained on how to engage the public.

Balinski suggested that the EDC would better serve the business community if there was no restriction on the number of business representatives on the board.

Vassallo added that Calvert has 4,958 businesses which mainly consist of small businesses whose owners may not have the time to participate on commissions/boards.

Vassallo added that Basu looked at the town center boundaries and suggested expanding the Prince Frederick boundary. She added that our commercial vacancy rate was <1 percent and only 3 percent of our total land area is commercial. The county is doing well, but is running out of space and is turning clients away and sending potential businesses to neighboring jurisdictions.

Hejl added that a county issue is land mass. Expansion can only be done in the town centers and the state places limitations on that expansion. There is not much area left to expand business.

Hejl added that as DED is split, we expect the new CMR department to be in the media and on local radio to educate citizens on what we are trying to do as a county – move forward with economic development.

Vassallo requested a group vote to give her authority to create a memo to the BOCC regarding dissolving the current commissions and creating an advisory board. Her goal is to present this to the BOCC at their July 25th public meeting. Vassallo reiterated that she wants to ensure all business sectors are represented on the new board, and that everyone has a voice, as we take this positive step forward.

Hejl suggested distributing the memo to the membership of the existing three committees. Vassallo will do this and added she will extend an invitation to commission members to attend the BOCC presentation. She requested that the commission Chairs and Vice-Chairs attend the presentation to answer any questions the BOCC may have.

DeStefano made a motion to move forward with creating the memo and combining the commissions. The motion was seconded by Canfield.

DeStefano asked if the current commissions were on hold until the BOCC approves the change. It was decided that each commission would hold a final transitional meeting in August/September.

IV. UPDATES

A. Patuxent Business Park (PBP)

Vassallo informed the group that she attended a ribbon cutting last month for Dominion's new 60,000 square foot warehouse, helipad and communication center in PBP. A tour will be scheduled for the new board members.

DED is currently working with two clients interested in purchasing lots in PBP. Balinski inquired about land already sold in PBP. Vassallo informed the group that a lot was sold to Osprey. Dominion has first refusal on the lot adjacent to their building.

B. Dominion

The Dominion project is 89% complete, with \$3.6 billion spent to date. The total project cost will be approximately \$4 billion. There are currently 3,000 workers on site, decreasing to 1,200 toward the end of the summer. There will be 200 permanent, full-time positions once construction is completed. Off Site Area A, currently being used by Dominion for storage and parking, will be restored and converted to a park once the Dominion LNG expansion project is complete. Dominion will cover the cost of the restoration and will donate this 98-acre property to the county.

Vassallo added that MDE approved the transfer of the bridge permit to the county. This will allow the county to keep the bridge that is currently located in Off Site Area A. Vassallo shared that the county is currently in negotiations with the State to keep the light at Rt. 4 and Cove Point Road. This light was built by Dominion and, although built to permanent specs, is considered temporary by the State. Vassallo informed the group that Off Site Area B, across from the Calvert Marine Museum is completely restored.

Vassallo stated that the project has gone smoothly and she received no complaints in the last 90 days. The most frequent complaint regarding the project was excessive dirt on the roads.

Sundermann inquired about the economic impact of the additional workers in the county. Vassallo said that Dominion did a pre- and post-economic impact study and added that the biggest concern will be the decline in sales to businesses in the Lusby area. She informed the group that Dominion will have a yearly outage to conduct maintenance, similar to what Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant does. She will request these be done at different times each year to benefit Lusby businesses.

Vandy Young stated that she expects to see a decrease in the rental market once the Dominion workers leave. Vassallo added that there was a push to hire locally so it may not be as hard a hit as feared, although the hotels have seen a definite increase.

C. Bond Rating Trip

DeStefano asked about the bond rating trip. Hejl offered that he thought it went very well. The raters didn't have many questions, which he attributes to Calvert County's AAA rating last year with mainly positive changes this year. Vassallo added that the county should receive its bond rating by July 12, 2017.

D. Calvert Shores Municipality

Vassallo informed the group that there will be a public hearing for the proposed Calvert Shores municipality on July 11. This is a great concern from the Lusby business community regarding potential tax increases if the municipality is put in place. If anyone in the membership would like to speak at the public hearing, let Vassallo know.

E. Broadband Franchise Agreement

Balinski inquired about the Comcast broadband franchise agreement. Vassallo offered that the consultant, CBG, has submitted a needs assessment. The assessment will be sent to the BOCC and the lawyers will begin to negotiate the agreement to include coverage and density. A public meeting will be held in July to discuss the findings of the report. Vassallo added that there were aging infrastructure concerns which are being addressed.

Vassallo offered that there are only four or five pockets within the county without coverage according to the coverage map. It will be hard to negotiate additional density due to the existing coverage level. Balinski added that there are school children and businesses in those pockets who are suffering. This is a tourism, agriculture and business issue and she asked that Calvert County encourage smaller internet providers to come to the county. Vassallo said that we have three last-mile providers currently looking at our area.

Vassallo stressed that the Comcast cable franchise agreement is not an internet agreement. The BOCC does not have authority over internet, only cable. The purpose of the public meeting is to collect feedback from the public and to reiterate to constituents that the Comcast broadband franchise agreement is not an internet agreement.

F. Miscellaneous

Balinski added that a meeting occurred with the Calvert County Chamber of Commerce, Calvert County Public Schools and JG Wentworth. JG Wentworth created a program to jump start the reclaiming of foreclosed homes for lower cost housing. This program offers combined FHA and construction loans to help citizens purchase and rehab foreclosed homes. Balinski asked if DED could help advertise and promote this opportunity to the community. Vassallo responded that county government cannot promote one company over another, but that EDC could aid in promotion with support from the county.

Vassallo informed the group that there is a 249-unit apartment complex in the permitting process near Chapline Place off Prince Frederick Boulevard. They are market-rate apartments and are slated to be available in approximately 18 months. The contractor is Builtrite Homes.

Hartline shared that the Southern Maryland Job Fair was held on June 20 at the Calvert Marine Museum. The event was well attended with approximately 1,000-1,100 job seekers and 72 employers. The event was

funded by the Rural Maryland Council and additional sponsors. He added that due to the large turnout of qualified applicants, the event will most likely return to the Calvert Marine Museum next year. He added that there was age and education diversity in the job seekers. Calvert and St. Mary’s counties’ representation was dramatically higher than when the event was held in Charles County.

Kelly Robertson-Slagle added that she attended the job fair and received feedback from employers that this was the most qualified pool of applicants they had seen in many years. There were job seekers who were highly qualified and many who already held security clearances. She added that there was a strong sense that attendees were currently employed and were looking for a change.

V. Adjournment

Vassallo thanked the group for attending and for their support through the upcoming transitions. She adjourned the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

DRAFT