

MINUTES

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 11, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Streett, Chair
Tucker McNulty, Vice Chair
Todd Boyle
Bill Kelly
Gil Kennedy

IN ATTENDANCE: Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator
Patrick Richards, Town Commissioner
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager
Jenny Falcone, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Robert Andrews, Harford Co. Economic Development

The virtual meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. via GoToMeeting (721105285)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2021

Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Boyle seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2021 meeting.

The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:

General Business Update and ED Dept. Update

Ms. Robertson reported that a U&O was issued to UM Upper Chesapeake for interior renovations and demolition work.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District is due on April 1 for its first redesignation with the Maryland State Arts Council. The redesignation takes place every 10 years.

Ms. Robertson reported that today was Maryland Arts Day in Annapolis, which took place virtually. She noted that the arts are a strong economic driver for the Town of Bel Air and the community. Ms. Robertson advised that Governor Hogan has proposed a \$2.9 million cut to the Maryland State Arts Council budget, and the participants at today's event advocated that the budget

remain at the mandated full amount. She reported that there were 450 participants from throughout the State and that there were 24 representatives from Harford County.

Ms. Robertson reported that Harford Artists had record-breaking sales for December and again in January with their two highest sales months since opening.

OLD BUSINESS:

Main Street Focus Group – (Table for March/April)

Mr. Streett advised that the focus group has reached out to State Highway Administration, and the group hopes to have an update soon along with a cost benefit analysis of the numbers received from Steve Kline.

Ms. Heidenreich inquired if the members would like to table further discussion until March or April. The members agreed to table further discussion until April when a more detailed update is likely to be available.

Burns Alley – Continued Discussion

Mr. Glidden advised that Kevin Small is working with a local engineering firm on a possible grant for a survey and conceptual design of Burns Alley. He advised that for now there is funding available in the FY22 budget to use as matching funds.

Ms. Falcone reported that there is another call scheduled for tomorrow with the engineering firm to discuss additional details.

High Density Housing – Continued Discussion

Mr. Streett advised that ECDC should keep discussions ongoing regarding those properties with high-density housing opportunities as more people are moving out of the cities and into the suburbs during the pandemic. He advised that this will bring more pedestrians to Main Street and more traffic to the retailers and restaurants. Mr. Streett advised that ECDC should support and advocate for these types of projects as they are aesthetically pleasing and great assets to the Town.

Mr. Kelly inquired if there is any document listing these properties in the Town. Mr. Streett stated that he previously emailed the members the Camoin Market Study with the pages that identified specific Town- and County-owned parcels, and these can be a great benchmark.

Mr. Streett advised that ECDC should have discussions with the Town Commissioners, and the department heads should have discussions with the County to put out a new RFP for the tire lot and for the Hays Street lot.

Mr. Glidden advised that once the 2020 Census information has been received, the Town will release a timeline for the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that any thoughts on this topic of parcels for development and redevelopment should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Glidden advised that there will be a two-step process, starting with the Comprehensive Plan first and then Comprehensive Zoning. He advised that public input and focus groups will be included in both the Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Zoning processes.

Mr. Streett stated that Bel Air Academy was a great litmus test for these types of projects as people are still inquiring about the availability of these properties during the pandemic.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that once the census information is received, a new Market Study will be initiated, and similar to what was done in the Camoin Market Study, the updated study will look at these parcels with the intention of getting them back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Boyle noted that interviews for the census were conducted in his neighborhood over the last few days. Mr. Glidden advised that he was informed that all data have been collected and that all in-person interviews have been completed. Mr. Boyle advised that the interviewers were vetted.

Stoltz Pavilion – Continued Discussion

Ms. Heidenreich stated that she had a discussion with Lauri Altman at Harford Mall. She advised that Ms. Altman was invited to today's meeting, and Ms. Altman indicated she will try to attend either the next or a future ECDC meeting. Ms. Heidenreich advised that there are several options on the table for sustainability of Harford Mall, and it is difficult for Ms. Altman to comment about placing an entertainment venue on the Mall property at this time.

Commercial Real Estate Stakeholders (CRES) Event – Update

Mr. Streett stated that a Save the Date went out to the stakeholders, and there will be a meeting next week with Town and Alliance staff to work on agenda items.

Mr. Kelly inquired about the purpose of the Stakeholders Meeting. Mr. Streett advised that the purpose of the meeting is for landlords, property owners and commercial brokers to provide input on the current marketplace and to discuss what they foresee for the future.

Mr. Kelly advised that he did not receive an invitation. Ms. Robertson advised that she will email the Save the Date to Mr. Kelly and anyone else who did not receive it.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that an invitation with meeting details, an agenda and R.S.V.P. will be emailed on March 1. A reminder email will be sent on March 24.

Mr. McNulty inquired if a survey should be sent to the stakeholders to get their input on the agenda items. Ms. Heidenreich suggested that their feedback could be collected at the Stakeholders Meeting and a follow-up meeting could then be scheduled.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that Ms. Robertson has completed a draft agenda, and she can send out another draft agenda after next week's meeting for feedback from everyone.

Annual Awards – Move Date to 10/28

Ms. Heidenreich advised that due to the Sip and Shop scheduled by the Downtown Alliance on October 21, the Annual Awards will be rescheduled for October 28 at the Bel Air Armory from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

Harford Mall – Visioning and Zoning Discussions

Mr. Richards advised that ECDC may want to reach out to someone in asset management at CBL, so the Town could help them rethink and possibly rezone the Mall property.

Mr. Glidden advised that he did contact Ms. Altman to inform her that the Town will be beginning the Comprehensive Plan process, and Ms. Altman indicated willingness to schedule a meeting among people from CBL, Kevin Small and Mr. Glidden by early spring. Mr. Streett requested that ECDC be kept informed, so the group can be a part of the conversation.

Ms. Parker inquired if it appears CBL is working on a plan for Harford Mall. Ms. Heidenreich advised that CBL is navigating multiple options. She advised that Ms. Altman is in direct communication with company stakeholders and those involved in asset management, and Ms. Altman would like to attend meetings and provide updates when the timing is appropriate for CBL.

Mr. Glidden advised that he receives calls from Ms. Altman every 3-4 weeks with questions about possible tenants, so CBL is constantly working to keep Mall spaces filled and active.

OTHER:

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. Falcone stated that the Alliance is working with the Harford County Tourism grant and should have the funding to complete Phase I and Phase II of the Music on Main initiative.

Ms. Falcone reported that the application for the COVID-19 relief microgrants went live this afternoon. The Alliance received just under \$135,000.00 from the grant, but they are still awaiting the press release from Governor Hogan before they can fully announce the program. Ms. Falcone stated that an email announcing that the application is live went to the downtown business and that \$5,000.00 microgrants are available.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is working with Chesapeake Environmental Management and Kevin Small on a grant to include funding for a survey and conceptual design for Burns Alley and to receive grant funding to install a pocket park on Bond Street to the left of the vape shop. This pocket park will incorporate stormwater management, an art installation and outdoor seating.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is working with the American Legion Post #55 on their mural project with funding the Alliance received from the Keep Maryland Beautiful grant.

Ms. Falcone stated that the January Main Street Social raised just under \$4,000.00 for the membership initiative. The next Main Street Social will be held on February 24 from 5:00-6:30 p.m. at Independent Brewing Co.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Chocolate, Brew & Wine Tour will be an eight-day event held from March 3-13. Tickets are \$55 and can be used to redeem for sweets and drinks over the eight-day event. Ms. Falcone reported that this year's event will have more businesses participating than year's past.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is working with the Jablon Group on its co-working space at 5 N. Main Street, and they are starting conversations to create leases.

County Update

Mr. Andrews stated that the second round of restaurant grants will close on February 19. To date, the County has processed 162 applications. Ms. Robertson advised that she will follow up with Town restaurants that have not yet applied for these grants.

Mr. Andrews advised that the Economic and Community Development staff will be moving back into their Havre de Grace offices on March 1 with a modified schedule.

Mr. Andrews reported that The Grove will be doubling its occupancy with eight (8) additional exterior spaces under the breezeway.

Other

Mr. Glidden reported that Kevin Small is still working on wayfinding signage in the Town.

Mr. Glidden reported that the Planning Department is still working on the Police Department/Town Hall expansion project.

Mr. Glidden reported that Chesapeake Sensory Plaza will hold its dedication on April 10 to coincide with Kite Day.

Mr. Glidden reported that the Farmers Market will open on April 3 with the same COVID-19 restrictions as last year.

Mr. Glidden reported that the Comprehensive Plan will emphasize three (3) areas: Harford Mall, Bond Street, and the industrial properties on Ellendale Street.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

