

## MINUTES

### ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

March 11, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chris Streett, Chair  
Tucker McNulty, Vice Chair  
Todd Boyle  
Jay Ellenby  
Gil Kennedy

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator  
Tony Giangordano, Harford County Council  
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner  
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager  
Kim Austing, 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 – February 11, 2021

Mr. Streett moved and Mr. McNulty seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 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 uBreakiFix, a computer repair business, at 626 Marketplace Drive.

Ms. Robertson reported that a remote worker from Bed, Bath and Beyond has moved into an office at 539 Rock Spring Road.

Ms. Robertson reported that HarCo Credit Union applied for a U&O for interior alterations.

Ms. Robertson reported that Skylight Creative at 13 N. Main Street also is working on interior renovations and should be opening in the spring.

Ms. Robertson reported that over 40 Bel Air restaurants received funding from the second round of restaurant grants from Harford County.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Best of Harford Awards were announced, and 28 Best of Harford Awards were given to Town of Bel Air businesses and individuals, including Streett Hopkins Real Estate (Best Realtor) and StaleFish Board Co. (Best Boutique). She reported that 55 Town of Bel Air businesses and individuals received honorable mentions.

Ms. Robertson reported that StaleFish Board Co. has reopened after an interior remodel.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Bel Air A&E District is seeking redesignation after 10 years. The application is due April 1, and the resolution and tax incentives were approved on March 2 by the Harford County Council. The resolution and tax incentives will go before the Bel Air Town Commissioners on March 15 with a public hearing prior to a vote on the resolution, which will include extending the current tax incentives in the A&E District. Ms. Robertson reported that of the 25 public art installations in the A&E District, 22 have been installed over the last 10 years.

Ms. Robertson reported that a mural honoring Medal of Honor recipient Alfred B. Hilton will be painted on the side of the American Legion Post #55 building on Bond Street this spring. The American Legion initiated this project, and the Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission and the Bel Air Downtown Alliance are contributing to the project.

Ms. Robertson reported that the A&E District is working on a strategic plan and she welcomes any feedback on the District from ECDC members.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Burns Alley - Continued Discussion

Mr. Glidden reported that the Planning Department is working on obtaining funding for this project.

High Density Housing – Continued Discussion

Mr. Streett advised that ECDC should keep conversations going with the stakeholders in the Town and with the Town and County representatives.

Commercial Real Estate Stakeholders (CRES) Event – Update

Ms. Robertson advised that the agenda is complete and will include discussions regarding the GIS program and the Comprehensive Plan, and there will be a PowerPoint presentation highlighting ECDC, Town of Bel Air and Bel Air Downtown Alliance initiatives.

Ms. Robertson advised that an invitation went out on March 1 to approximately 95 people. She advised that 17 R.S.V.P.s have been received, not including Town staff.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Economic Development Department is working with the Downtown Alliance on the presentation, and a reminder will be sent one week prior to the meeting on March 31.

Ms. Robertson advised that ECDC members may contact her with the names of anyone they feel should be invited to the Stakeholders Meeting.

Ms. Parker advised that a Main Street property owner inquired what items will be discussed at the meeting to determine if she should travel to Maryland to attend the meeting. Ms. Robertson advised that the agenda for the meeting was attached to the invitation.

Mr. Streett advised that it would be beneficial if the stakeholders that are organizing the meeting could meet in person to fine tune the agenda on the Wednesday or Thursday before the Stakeholders Meeting. Ms. Robertson stated that she will coordinate that meeting.

Mr. Andrews and Mr. Streett both requested that a reminder be sent out to all the stakeholders during the last week of March.

#### Harford Mall – Visioning and Zoning Discussions

Mr. Glidden reported that the Planning Department is still taking calls about potential backfill opportunities at the Mall, and he will share more information as soon as he is able.

Mr. Glidden reported that Lauri Altman will be scheduling a meeting between the Town and CBL executives. Mr. Giangjordano advised that the Planning Department should reach out to him if he can help with anything regarding Harford Mall.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### Open Discussion

Mr. Streett stated that it is great news for restaurant and retail establishments that Governor Hogan has removed the capacity restrictions.

Ms. Parker advised that the Town is in line with the County, and the County is in line with the state regarding the removal of capacity restrictions. She advised that social distancing will not allow for maximum capacity regarding tables at restaurants, and the Town will continue mask-wearing messaging as it is in alignment with the recommendations of the Harford County Health Department.

Ms. Robertson advised that the Bel Air Armory is now able to increase capacity, which will help bring more activity to the downtown core. The Armory was able to release more tickets to the Family Fun Series with Governor Hogan's announcement.

Mr. Giangiordano advised that he has spoken to people in various departments in the State, and the State will not uphold the restriction that an unoccupied table be placed between each table at restaurants, and the State will allow most restaurants to operate at full capacity.

Mr. Streett inquired if the Town will allow restaurants to continue to maximize outdoor seating. Mr. Glidden advised that the Town will continue to allow restaurants to continue to use the COVID-19 temporary use permits and tent permits for outdoor seating. He advised that restaurants will have 30 days after all restrictions are lifted to return to standard conditions.

Mr. Streett advised that it would be a good time to begin discussing the concept of pedlets and parklets again with the weather getting warmer. Ms. Robertson advised that this is something that could be revisited on Town streets. Mr. Ellenby inquired if the Town could make a request about parklets and pedlets to SHA. Ms. Robertson advised that she will investigate about making a request to SHA.

Ms. Parker advised that Pennsylvania Avenue could be utilized for outdoor seating again. Mr. Streett advised that something more attractive than jersey walls should be used. Mr. Boyle advised that there have been discussions about using the lot next to Main Street Tower and Burns Alley to spread people out for First Fridays. Mr. Ellenby stated that more creativity could be used on Pennsylvania Avenue rather than only tables and chairs. Ms. Parker advised that she will bring this up at the next ABC meeting.

**OTHER:**

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance's membership drive is in full force.

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance has now been awarded \$190,000.00 from the SERI grant, and 38 Town businesses will be awarded \$5,000.00 each.

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance is working on the Tourism grant for the next fiscal year, and the funding will be focused on the BBQ Bash, summer movie nights, and the drive-in movie series.

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance is working on an MOU with the Town regarding the Music on Main project. The MOU will outline who will have control of Music on Main and where it will be located. Ms. Austing stated that the Music on Main project will be on the agenda of the Stakeholders Meeting. A letter will be sent to the downtown businesses to make them aware of the project and to inform them that the volume can be controlled and muted and that this phase of the project will be from Lee Street to Office Street.

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance is working with the Planning Department on updating the wayfinding signs for some of the parking lots. At this point all sign locations have been identified.

Ms. Austing reported that the Alliance is working with the Planning Department on refreshing Burns Alley and on a pocket park on Bond Street.

Ms. Austing reported that the Chocolate, Brew and Wine Tour will run through March 13, and approximately 340 of 375 tickets have been sold.

Ms. Austing reported that First Fridays will move forward, and the Alliance is working with the Town to use an additional lot to make it more of a strolling event.

Ms. Austing reported that summer movie nights and drive-in movies, in partnership with Winter Wonderland, will continue this year.

Ms. Austing reported that the BBQ Bash will be held in the fall rather than August as the Alliance received good feedback about having last year's event in October.

Ms. Austing reported that Roll Out the Barrel will be held in October.

Ms. Austing reported that the co-working space lease will be finalized at 5 N. Main Street to occupy 1,500 sf of the first floor. The Alliance offices will move to this location, and there will be four (4) private offices and four (4) drop-in desks for co-working. The target date is June 1.

### County Update

Mr. Andrews reported that Harford County and the three (3) municipalities have earmarks for funding from the \$1.9 trillion COVID Relief Bill. The County is awaiting the details and rules surrounding distribution.

Mr. Andrews reported that County Executive Barry Glassman has followed Governor Hogan's directive to relax capacity rules for restaurants, businesses and venues.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Restaurant Grant has closed with approximately 257 restaurants receiving over \$4,100.00 each.

Mr. Andrews reported that a tenant will be moving into the 1.2 million sf at the Eastgate project in the Perryman peninsula. The name of the tenant should be released by next week.

Mr. Andrews reported that there are leases that will be announced shortly for Tower Logistics and other warehouse spaces.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Economic and Community Development offices have been reopened in Havre de Grace.

Mr. Andrews reported that there are now four (4) Amazon locations in Harford County.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Grove will host Fourth Fridays from 4-7 p.m. with music, food trucks and local craft beverages. The County Fair Cowboy Roundup will be held on July 17.

Mr. Andrews reported that Project Opportunity has been unveiled with assistance for veterans to start a business.

Mr. Streett inquired about Chesapeake Real Estate dropping out of the Abingdon Woods project. Mr. Andrews advised that the County just learned about this and is working on learning more of the details. Chesapeake Real Estate did sell their interest to another unnamed party.

Mr. Giangiordano reported that the County Council approved community solar with some amendments that will protect historic and agricultural areas.

Mr. Giangiordano reported that County restaurants have experienced an uptick in their numbers over the last two (2) months. He noted that one of the challenges has been finding people to work and come back to work.

#### Other

Mr. Streett suggested that ECDC hold its April meeting in person.

Ms. Robertson advised that Town staff will return to their offices on April 5.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.