

**MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**April 8, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jay Ellenby  
Bill Kelly  
Todd Boyle

**VIA TELEPHONE:** Tucker McNulty, Vice Chair

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development  
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator  
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner  
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager  
Jenny Falcone, Bel Air Downtown Alliance  
Robert Andrews, Harford Co. Economic Development  
Elizabeth Janney, *Bel Air Patch*  
Catherine Butrim, Recording secretary

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. at Town Hall, 39 N. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, MD 21014.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:**

Approval of Minutes – March 11, 2021

Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Boyle seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2021 meeting.

The motion carried.

**TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:**

General Business Update and ED Dept. Update

Ms. Heidenreich reported that Mission BBQ will be moving into the space vacated by Pier 1 Imports at Tollgate Marketplace.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Harford County Health Department has received a U&O for interior renovations at 1 N. Main Street.

Ms. Robertson reported that Best Buy has received a U&O for interior alterations at 602 Boulton Street.

Ms. Robertson reported that Tollgate Marketplace received a U&O for interior demolition at 627 Belair Road.

Ms. Robertson reported that Upper Chesapeake received a U&O for modifications at 615 MacPhail Road.

Ms. Robertson reported that the A&E District redesignation application has been submitted, and the Town should receive a reply from the Secretary of Commerce within 60 days.

Ms. Robertson reported that a grant was submitted to the Maryland State Arts Council for FY22 A&E District operating support.

Ms. Robertson reported that an emergency grant was submitted to the Maryland State Arts Council for losses incurred at the Bel Air Armory due to COVID-19 cancellations.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### Burns Alley - Continued Discussion

Discussion regarding Burns Alley was tabled for May as there are no new developments to report this month.

### High Density Housing – Continued Discussion

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Town is planning a market study for this fall to determine what can be done to attract development. She reported that an RFP will be issued in late summer or early fall. The market study will look at commercial activity in the Town, including real estate and consumer behavior and residential housing from the perspective of developers rather than homeowners.

### Commercial Real Estate Stakeholders (CRES) Event – Recap

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the CRES event was a good meeting with good feedback. The general issues that arose include the following:

- A gap in the way the Town markets the ParkMobile app
- Pedestrian safety
- The cost of the required traffic impact analysis for developers
- Vacancies in the town
- Homelessness solutions
- Utility set-up fees

Ms. Heidenreich advised that a survey was distributed to those who attended the CRES event, and that survey form is included in the packet distributed to the ECDC members this evening. She invited the members to submit their comments and feedback on the survey.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that a PowerPoint was presented during the event highlighting the collaboration among ECDC, the Bel Air Downtown Alliance and the Economic Development Department, and some of stakeholders mentioned that they were pleased to know more about this collaboration.

Ms. Falcone reported that the stakeholders were forthright with their feedback, and some suggested holding a quarterly CRES meeting.

Ms. Robertson reported that 40 people were in attendance, including Town staff. She advised that she will review the notes from the event and send them to the ECDC members.

Mr. Kelly inquired about the goal of the CRES meeting. Ms. Heidenreich stated that the goal of the CRES event is to stay in touch with the real estate community, get feedback on what's working or not working for them and create an opportunity for ongoing conversation. She advised that in the future, CRES meetings will be shorter and more productive as the stakeholders continue to attend meetings and continue conversations with the Town.

Mr. McNulty inquired if anyone will be designated to spearhead the various issues that were raised during the CRES meeting and then report back with the measures taken to address the issues. Ms. Heidenreich advised that there will be discussion about addressing issues when the replies to all the surveys are received. Ms. Robertson advised that there are numerous commissions and committees that exists to address the kinds of issues that were raised, and that those committees will receive the feedback received at the CRES meeting and in the survey.

Mr. McNulty inquired about any progress made by the Traffic Safety Task Force. Mr. Kelly advised that those meeting were put on hold last year due to COVID-19. Mr. McNulty advised that the Traffic Safety Task Force should be revived and should be on the agenda for next month's meeting as it is a large concern for the stakeholders.

Mr. Boyle advised that Dr. Streett and Phil Rhudy made comments about pedestrian safety that were spot on. He advised that the State Police should have a stronger presence on Main Street, along with the Bel Air Police, especially during the times when pedestrian traffic is heavier.

Mr. McNulty inquired if the GIS platform used by Kevin Small at the CRES meeting can be used by ECDC to promote some of the vacancies in the Town. Ms. Heidenreich advised that there is a component of the GIS that can map vacancies, and that is part of the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Robertson noted that she and Ms. Heidenreich have a meeting next week with DataStory about using GIS to map public art. Mr. Glidden advised that the initial effort for the GIS is to provide answers to the most commonly asked questions that the Town receives.

#### Harford Mall – Visioning and Zoning Discussions

Mr. Ellenby suggested that some of the issues to be discussed, including the survey results, should be segmented into separate meetings.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that she hopes that Lauri Altman will be able to attend a future meeting.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### Parklets, Pedlets & Outdoor Seating

Ms. Heidenreich stated that the guidelines that ECDC and the Town had previously worked on in 2019 for parklets, pedlets and outdoor dining are in the packets distributed for tonight's meeting. She advised that Christine McPherson, who now works for the Department of Housing and Community Development, requested a copy of these guidelines because the State is creating some comprehensive guidelines for outdoor dining for towns throughout Maryland. Ms. Heidenreich advised that the members should review these guidelines and send any feedback to her or Ms. Robertson.

Ms. Parker inquired if the retailers were consulted about these guidelines. Ms. Falcone advised that she believes only the Town's restaurants were consulted in the initial discussions. Ms. Parker advised that the Town's retailers should be consulted about the guidelines for parklets, pedlets and outdoor dining because a restaurant recently covered one of the parking meters on Main Street, and three (3) retailers contacted the Town with complaints about this because the parking on Main Street is limited.

Ms. Robertson advised that these guidelines were put together for Town roads and not Main Street as the Town has met resistance on this issue with the State Highway Administration (SHA) regarding outdoor sidewalk and pedlet seating. She also noted that Bel Air is unique from other towns because its Main Street resides on a state highway.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the parklets and pedlets should not be used by restaurants exclusively; retailers would need to be included. Mr. Boyle suggested that a co-op between restaurants and retailers be created to make use of the parklets and pedlets as a shared space. He advised that there should be a discussion about whether the relaxed outdoor dining rules will continue post COVID-19.

Mr. McNulty advised that ECDC should come to a decision as a committee very soon regarding whether parklets and pedlets on Main Street are realistic, and if not, ECDC should focus on issues that are more pressing to the stakeholders in the community.

Mr. Ellenby advised that the issues of parklets and pedlets, slowing down the traffic on Main Street and the Town purchasing Main Street are all intertwined.

Mr. Kelly advised that he does not think it is realistic for the Town to purchase Main Street from the State.

Ms. Falcone noted that vehicle traffic stats are provided to businesses that are interested in purchasing or leasing spaces on Main Street, and these high volume stats are drivers for businesses to move downtown.

The members present agreed that the parklets and pedlets are worth having a conversation in a separate meeting to come to a decision about pursuing them. Ms. Heidenreich advised that she will send some possible dates for a separate meeting to the members. She suggested that ECDC could discuss ways to use parklets and pedlets throughout other areas in the Town to expand the pedestrian footprint from Main Street outward and throughout the Town.

Ms. Falcone noted that if Pennsylvania Avenue will be closed again for outdoor dining, the Alliance has discussed having a business sponsor the area to make it look more attractive and getting the Mill involved to have seasonal flowers placed there.

**OTHER:**

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is planning First Fridays and is working to double the footprint of the event with amenities such as a mini antique car show, a kids' section and two (2) bands. The event will be in the Black-Eyed Suzie's parking lot and extend through Burns Alley to the Main Street Tower parking lot.

Ms. Falcone reported that the BBQ Bash will be held on October 15-16, and a press release will be sent out shortly.

Ms. Falcone reported that the first Belle Aire Market will be held on Mother's Day. The Market will be held May-November.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Main Street Social will be held on April 28 at Looney's Pub.

Ms. Falcone reported the Alliance submitted the FY22 Harford County tourism grant on March 28, and the Alliance is awaiting receipt of funding from the State for the MD-SERI grant it was awarded. The Alliance will award \$5,000.00 grants to 38 Town businesses when funding is received.

Ms. Falcone reported that once the construction schedule is finalized at 5 N. Main, they will begin taking tenants for the co-working space.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is working with the Town on the MOU for Music on Main.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Design Committee has talked to Harford Mutual, and they are willing to discuss further details about installing a pocket park on Bond Street.

### County Update

Mr. Andrews reported that Wayfair has taken over the last parcel in the Eastgate project of Perryman Peninsula, with a space over 1.2 million sf, which also will bring over 200 jobs to Harford County.

Mr. Andrews reported that Medifast, a diet food manufacturer, has taken over 500,000 sf in Aberdeen.

Mr. Andrews reported that four (4) additional large-scale companies are looking at warehouse space at Tower Logistics in Aberdeen and behind Walmart on Route 40 in Aberdeen.

Mr. Andrews reported that Jack's Small Engines in Jarrettsville and Forest Hill has been acquired by Northern Tool Co.

Mr. Andrews reported that round three of new State grants for restaurants should be rolled out next week. Hotel grants will also be rolled out next week. A round of nonprofit grants should be rolled out in the next two weeks, and they will be available to 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(19) (veterans' organizations) nonprofits.

Mr. Andrews reported that the County is awaiting federal funding from the new COVID-19 legislation sometime in July.

Mr. Andrews reported that a State mass vaccination site will be opening at Ripken Stadium on April 19.

Mr. Andrews reported that he has brought copies of Alphabet Suit, a guide to the acronyms of the APG community, for the ECDC members.

Mr. Andrews reported that Fourth Fridays will begin this month at The Grove, which is the County's agri-business incubator.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

