

MINUTES

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

May 13, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Streett, Chair
Bill Kelly
Todd Boyle
Donna Dickey
Gil Kennedy

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
Kim Austing, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Tony Giangiordano, Harford County Council
Robert Andrews, Harford Co. Economic Development

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 – April 8, 2021

Mr. Kennedy moved and Mr. Boyle seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2021 meeting.

The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:

General Business Update and ED Dept. Update

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the Town Commissioners will vote to move forward with the FY22 budget on Monday, May 17. She reported that the Town Commissioners also will vote on the construction of the new building for the Bel Air Police Department, which should be moving forward.

Ms. Heidenreich reported that beginning on June 1, all Town board and work session meetings will be occurring in house.

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the Economic Development Department is continuing to promote jobs on social media and in every way it can.

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the June ECDC meeting will be the last meeting before breaking for summer. She advised that the June meeting will be casual, and she will consult with Chris Streett and Tucker McNulty about the meeting location and the recognition for Paul Thompson.

Ms. Robertson reported that a U&O was issued for interior work for future tenants at 623 and 627 Tollgate Marketplace.

Ms. Robertson reported that a U&O was issued for Joseph T Salon on North Main Street at the former NVS Salon location.

Ms. Robertson reported that a U&O was issued for Julie Marindin Law Offices at 18 South Main Street.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Board of Appeals is reviewing a submission for a tattoo parlor on Gateway Drive.

Ms. Robertson reported that a traffic review is being planned for condominiums to be built on Hickory Avenue across from the Bel Air Library.

Ms. Robertson reported that an interior demolition is planned for the former Friendly's location on South Main Street, which is slated to become a real estate office.

Ms. Robertson reported that Dunkin' Donuts is searching for a location in the Town.

Ms. Robertson reported that Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers is seeking a location in Bel Air.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Homestead Park project will begin in July. Parking, ADA accessibility and a pickleball court will be added.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Town is looking at adding disc golf at Rockfield Park.

Ms. Robertson reported that the Office Street pocket park was awarded grant funding in the amount of \$60,464.00 from Community Parks and Playgrounds.

Ms. Robertson reported that on behalf of the Arts & Entertainment District, she is working on a GIS app to map the Public Art Walk and a tour of the rest of the public artwork in the Town. The GIS app, which will be mobile friendly, will be completed in June.

Ms. Robertson reported that the American Legion mural was delayed due to the relocation of their A/C compressor and BGE lines. The muralist has been paid the first installment and will begin the mural when those relocations are complete.

Ms. Robertson reported that banners promoting the A&E District have been placed in the windows at Boyd & Fulford and at 4 North Main Street.

Mr. Glidden reported that the Planning Commission held a hearing, and the demolition of the Sears building will proceed. The building will be replaced with a 43,000 sf grocery store and 13,000 sf of retail space.

Mr. Glidden reported that the Planning Commission will hold a hearing next month to approve the Mission BBQ planned for the former Pier 1 space, which will include an outdoor dining area.

Mr. Glidden reported that Chick-fil-A will appear before the Planning Commission to request approval to modify their drive-thru lanes.

OLD BUSINESS:

Burns Alley - Continued Discussion

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Town is seeking grant funding for the survey that is needed to kick off the project at Burns Alley.

High Density Housing – Continued Discussion

Mr. Glidden reported that Hickory Flats is proposed for three (3) parcels on Hickory Avenue between Pennsylvania Avenue and HARCO Federal Credit Union. If approved, the parcels will be combined, and apartments and/or condominiums will be built in the range of 70-100 units.

Harford Mall – Visioning and Zoning Discussions

Ms. Heidenreich advised that Lauri Altman sends her apologies for not being able to attend tonight's meeting. Ms. Altman is at CBL's York Galleria Mall on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Parklets, Pedlets & Outdoor Seating

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Town's guidelines for parklets, pedlets and outdoor dining have been forwarded to Christine McPherson at the Department of Housing and Community

Development. She advised that parklets in the Town would be for restaurant and retail establishments and not for service-oriented businesses, and they may only be located on Town streets.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that any ECDC members who would like to pursue the closure, or any other initiatives related to Main Street may join the committee spearheaded by Jay Ellenby. She advised that the Town does not see any advantage in placing parklets on Main Street or on any roads with traffic moving at 30 mph. Ms. Heidenreich advised that when the final design template is issued by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and approved by Town administration, parklets may be placed on Town-owned side streets with slow-moving traffic.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Town does encourage outdoor dining wherever permissible, and it does see more outdoor dining on Main Street moving forward.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that parklets will now be handled by the committee spearheaded by Jay Ellenby, and the topic will be removed from the ECDC agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

Traffic Safety Task Force 2021

Ms. Falcone noted that the Bel Air Police Department has assembled a community policing group focused on pedestrian safety. She advised that the Traffic Safety Task Force should be back on track as things begin to open up, and she will speak to Jesse Bane for an update.

Mr. Boyle advised that drivers often do not yield to oncoming traffic when turning left at the Maitland Street / Hickory Avenue /Churchville Road intersection. Mr. Boyle also advised that the plants and shrubs at this crosswalk create a blind spot for vehicles.

OTHER:

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. Falcone reported that First Friday in May was cancelled due to storms. The next First Friday will be June 4.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Belle Aire Market was held on Mother's Day. She advised that it did rain, but traffic was steady and did increase foot traffic downtown.

Ms. Falcone stated that the Main Street Social will be held on May 26 at MaGerk's.

Ms. Falcone advised that the BBQ Bash will be held on October 15-16, and the Alliance is working on obtaining all approvals from the Town, County and State.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Summer Movie Series has been cancelled this year due to several unforeseen circumstances. The Alliance hopes to continue the Summer Movie Series in 2022.

Ms. Falcone reported that the MD-SERI grant funding has been awarded to downtown businesses. She reported that 38 businesses received \$5,000.00 grants, and one (1) business received a \$4,113.00 grant.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance has been unofficially informed by the State that it will receive \$35,000.00 in funding for façade improvement. The Alliance is awaiting official word from the State to start advertising this program.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance received \$2,500.00 in funding from the FY22 Keep Maryland Beautiful program, and those funds will go to DPW for tree plantings in the Town.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is working on two (2) grants from the State for supplies for the co-working space and a new Downtown Alliance website.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance hopes to be in the co-working space at 5 North Main Street by the end of June.

Ms. Falcone reported that the Alliance is discussing the possibility of creating a pocket park on the parcel of land owned by Harford Mutual on Bond Street.

Mr. Giangiordano inquired about any efforts to discuss closing Main Street for First Fridays with the State. Ms. Falcone advised that there is now a separate committee spearheading efforts for the closure of Main Street. She advised that the State has informed the Town that they are reluctant to close Main Street on Fridays when people are commuting from work. She advised that the State is open to closing Main Street on Saturdays when people are not commuting. Ms. Falcone advised that there are challenges for the Alliance, which is largely made up of volunteers, to shut down Main Street for events like First Fridays. She advised that alternatives to closing Main Street are incorporating Burns Alley and closing down Courtland Street for First Fridays.

Mr. Giangiordano inquired if the Town would entertain having events on Saturdays if the State is willing to close Main Street on Saturdays and if the Town would alternate First Fridays with a Saturday event. Ms. Falcone advised that the Alliance would like to hold a number of events on Saturdays when

the road is closed, but she noted that it would be best to hold events separate from First Fridays because people can become confused when events change too often.

Mr. Boyle advised that Halloween would be an ideal time to close Main Street considering thousands of kids and families participated in Halloween events downtown last year.

Mr. Kennedy noted that Amy Chmielewski informed him that the State is open to closing the road on select days and that many businesses are amenable to closing Main Street. Ms. Parker advised that some businesses, such as restaurants and retail, want Main Street to remain open because they want traffic driving by every day. Ms. Parker also advised that the State does want to be given the appropriate amount of notice and details about events that would call for the closure of Main Street. Ms. Heidenreich advised that closing Main Street is a complicated circumstance, and the Town will continue to focus on what will work best for downtown businesses.

County Update

Mr. Andrews reported that the County closed the restaurant grant program with over 200 restaurants receiving \$2,000.00 each.

Mr. Andrews reported that the hotel grant program closed with 32 applicants receiving \$10,000 each.

Mr. Andrews reported that a nonprofit grant program will open on June 4 and will be open to all 501 nonprofits, and there will be \$850,000.00 to distribute. Applicants should google Harford nonprofit grants to apply.

Mr. Andrews reported that logistics and manufacturing spaces in the County are filling up quickly.

Mr. Andrews reported that the County will no longer issue loans. The County is investigating other options that will fit in with its funding.

Mr. Andrews reported that Military Appreciation Day, sponsored by the Harford Chamber of Commerce, will be held virtually on May 20.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Army Alliance Annual Dinner will be held at Water's Edge Event Center on June 7. Tickets are available at the Army Alliance website.

Mr. Andrews reported that Fourth Fridays at the Grove attracted 200 people in April. May 28 is the next Fourth Friday event at the Grove.

Mr. Andrews reported that a Yoga Zen event will be held on May 27 at the Grove with Love Evolution Yoga during Mental Health Week.

Mr. Andrews reported that the County is working with the Health Department to develop marketing materials to encourage Harford residents to get vaccinated.

Mr. Andrews reported that the Hub, a co-working space, will be opening in early July in Jarrettsville. The Hub will be sharing space with the County 911 Center.

Mr. Andrews reported that Aberdeen Proving Ground will have a new Commander in early July. He reported that General Taylor will be returning to retire in Harford County and will be consulting with Havre de Grace on APG matters.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Dickey moved and Mr. Streett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

The motion carried.

