

MINUTES
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
February 14, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Thompson, Chair
Chris Streett, Vice Chair
Bill Kelly
Todd Boyle
Bill Seccurro
Jay Ellenby

IN ATTENDANCE: Angela Robertson, Grants Coordinator
Christine McPherson, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Donna Dickey, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Robert Andrews, Harford County OED
Catherine Butrim, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. in the conference room at Town Hall, 39 N. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Approval of Minutes – January 10, 2019

Mr. Ellenby moved and Mr. Seccurro seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting.

The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:

General Business Update and ED Dept. Update

Ms. Robertson stated that Gigi's Lash Lounge will be coming to 100 S. Main Street.

Ms. Robertson stated that Bows and Britches has relocated from 140 N. Bond Street, but she does not know where the new location is at this time.

Ms. Robertson stated that Charlotte Russe in Harford Mall is closing.

Ms. Robertson stated that Starbucks at Barnes and Noble has closed.

Ms. Robertson stated that interior construction for Sprouts Farmers Market is in progress at the former hhgregg location.

Ms. Robertson stated that Zima Cryo is opening in mid-February.

Ms. Robertson stated that John's Men's Boutique on Pennsylvania Avenue will have a ribbon cutting on April 5 at 2 p.m., and their grand opening will be held on April 6.

Ms. Robertson stated that on January 31, Armory Marketplace won the Preservation Award for Project Excellence Community Impact presented by Maryland Historical Trust.

Ms. Robertson stated that she is working with several other organizations in her capacity as the A&E District Manager to create a countywide arts, history and culture passport program that will likely be launching in the fall.

Ms. Robertson stated that Kevin Small informed her that Bel Air Academy is close to receiving its building permit. Mr. Thompson stated that they have run into some challenges with material and labor costs and the rental rates, but they should be able to pull the permits when they have a general contractor on board. Mr. Thompson stated that they are going through the final pricing for the new townhomes that will be rentals. He advised these were approved by the Planning Commission, and they anticipate being in for permit within the next six (6) weeks. Mr. Thompson stated that they would like to begin construction simultaneously, but it may be May or June before they can begin.

Ms. Robertson stated that the Bailey Lane project was originally submitted as apartments, but it will now be townhomes.

Ms. Robertson stated that State Highway Administration (SHA) will be making improvements at the intersection of Gordon and Bond Streets.

Ms. Robertson stated that there will be improvements on Broadway between Hickory Avenue and Main Street. She advised that this section is a detour for the Moores Mill Road improvements that have been put on hold, so these improvement cannot begin until Moores Mill is complete.

Ms. Robertson stated that Chick-fil-A is progressing, and Popeyes is in the permitting process. She advised that Popeyes will be a modular concept that will be completed much faster than Chick-fil-A.

Mr. Securro inquired if there is a vacancy report for the Town as a whole. Ms. Robertson stated that she will investigate if there is a report for vacancies in the Town as a whole.

Ms. McPherson stated that there will be a Traffic Task Force meeting soon. She advised that the first scheduled meeting was cancelled due to snow.

Mr. Thompson advised that he has a client who would like to bring an ax-throwing startup into the Town.

OLD BUSINESS:

Outdoor Dining-Guidelines for Platforms/Bollards/Accessories

Ms. Robertson stated that the members should have received the Town Code regarding outdoor dining. Mr. Thompson stated that he was hoping for a draft of changes that can be implemented, so that things can begin to take shape over the spring and summer. Mr. Thompson stated that Pat Richards informed him that the Alliance would start discussions with SHA, but he feels it is important that the Town get behind this issue.

Ms. Robertson stated that the Planning Department is on board with bringing this concept to Town-operated roads but that there are concerns about putting in a formal request with SHA for Main and Bond. She advised that there is a concern that SHA could shut down existing outdoor dining if the Town submits a formal request. Ms. Robertson stated that Trish Heidenreich advised that the Town would like ECDC's design feedback, so that the Town can put together design guidelines to submit to SHA if ECDC would like to move forward. She advised that Ms. Heidenreich suggested submitting the completed design guidelines to DPW and Planning for feedback prior to taking them before the Town Commissioners in May for approval. Ms. Heidenreich advised that these steps should occur before a submission is made to SHA.

Mr. Seccurro advised that curbside dining should be approached from a safety aspect and consumer benefit aspect rather than a purely business aspect.

Mr. Thompson stated that he and Ms. McPherson are prepared to reach out to the SHA rep to schedule a meeting, and it is important that Pat Richards, Kevin Small and Trish Heidenreich are there.

Ms. McPherson stated that the Town should be mindful about any negative impact submitting to SHA may have on businesses such as Sunny Day Café and Savona, which have been operating outdoor dining on Main Street.

Ms. McPherson stated that she can send an email to all the Maryland Main Streets to inquire if they have state highways traveling through their Main Streets and if they also have outdoor dining on those streets.

Ms. Robertson stated that Ms. Heidenreich advised that a location for outdoor dining be tested on a street other than Main Street.

Mr. Seccurro advised that no permanent structures be constructed, so they can be more easily removed if the concept does not succeed.

Mr. Andrews recommended that a preliminary concept be created and then approach SHA for feedback.

Armory Vision and Revenue - Update

Ms. Robertson advised that research is being collected on armories in other areas, including the armory in West Chester, Pennsylvania which has been converted to a successful performance venue.

Ms. McPherson reported that the first concert in the House Party Concert Series sold out with 350 tickets sold. She stated that there was no sponsor for the show with Petty Coat Junction performing. Ms. McPherson stated that the crowd age was mostly 45-65. She advised that the Downtown Alliance earned approximately \$5,000.00 from the event and that the attendees were not only from Harford County but from areas such as Baltimore County and Pennsylvania as well.

NEW BUSINESS:

Maryland American Water Rate Increase: Educate Bel Air

Mr. Thompson stated that Richard Corbi of Maryland American Water would like the Town to educate the development community about the 33 percent rate increase, which is about to go into effect. Mr. Thompson advised that water EDUs are not being charged to developers for new projects; however, the sewer connection charges will remain. Mr. Thompson stated that Maryland American Water's rate is the same as Harford County's rate.

OTHER:

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. McPherson stated that the Alliance is in the middle of its membership campaign and is actively seeking new members and membership renewals.

Ms. McPherson stated that the Alliance is currently working on its co-working feasibility study and is working on two (2) sites in the downtown area. She stated that there is local and State government support to move the project forward, and \$160,000 has been donated from a local philanthropist to bring the co-working project to the downtown area.

Ms. McPherson stated that Girls Night Out has been rebranded as Sip and Shop in order to bring families and men to downtown for extended shopping hours.

County Update

Mr. Andrews stated that Financial Management for Business seminar will be held on February 20 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Mr. Andrews stated that Minority and Small Business Resource Day will be held on February 26 from 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Mr. Andrews stated that Aberdeen will be purchasing all its water from Havre de Grace beginning next year.

Mr. Andrews stated that Aberdeen Proving Ground is about to complete its water generation plant that will feed all the needs of APG, which will free up County resources for new development.

Mr. Andrews stated that the County has been focusing its resources and marketing budget on new marketing materials and public relations pieces for the County. He advised that the County has created two (2) new videos. which can be viewed at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/718/Economic-Development>.

Mr. Andrews stated that the Harford Community College at Edgewood study is continuing and is getting close to finding a space in the Edgewood area. Mr. Thompson advised that there will be a meeting on March 13 at HCC to review the business plan.

Mr. Andrews stated that the I-95 Distribution Park, a/k/a Abingdon Woods, is moving along and is going through the public comment period.

Mr. Andrews stated that XPO Logistics will be shutting down and releasing 165 employees.

Other

Ms. Robertson stated that the Town has received a \$150,000.00 grant from American Water Charitable Foundation to create Chesapeake Sensory Plaza, which will be a creative playground with an educational component focused on the Chesapeake Bay watershed area and located at Rockfield Creative Playground.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m.