

## MINUTES

### ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

April 14, 2022

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Todd Boyle  
Bill Kelly  
Donna Dickey  
Gil Kennedy

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development  
Mary Chance, Town Commissioner  
Kevin Small, Director of Planning  
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner  
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager  
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator  
Stephanie Zahn, Grants Coordinator  
Elise Gerard, Economic Development Admin. Secretary  
Jenny Falcone, Bel Air Downtown Alliance  
Robert Andrews, Harford County OECD

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. at the Bel Air Armory, 37 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:**

##### Approval of Minutes – January 13, 2022

Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2022 meeting.

The motion carried.

#### **TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:**

##### General Business News – Openings, Closings, Moves

Ms. Robertson reported the following:

- The Commercial Real Estate and Retailers Forum will be held on April 27 at 8:30 in the Amory in conjunction with BADA and ECDC. A survey for additional agenda items went out earlier this week. Invitations requesting an RSVP went out this afternoon, and a reminder will go out at the end of next week.
- Busy Bee Boutique opened at Armory Marketplace, Suite 101

- Several candidates are moving to the next phase of the selection process to fill the vacancy at Armory Marketplace. There have been many inquiries and interviews conducted for the vacancy.
- Apricot Lane located at 105 North Main Street will be holding its ribbon cutting on May 13.
- You Make Scents Candles opened at 31 West Courtland Street.
- Clearpath Solutions opened at 5 North Main Street.
- RockITek opened at 5 North Main Street.
- Love Evolution Studio opened at 130 North Bond Street.
- Advancing Beyond the Spectrum opened at 602 South Atwood Road (ribbon cutting on 4/18).
- Facilities Service Group opened at 18 South Main Street.
- JS Medical Billing opened at 604 Moores Mill Road.
- Vintage Vinyl opened at 556 Baltimore Pike.
- Facilities Service Group opened at 18 South Main Street.
- Maddoz Tobacco Gift Shop opened at 100 South Main Street.
- Kore Barre and Yoga opened at 15 East Churchville Road.

#### Building Permits, Development Projects

Mr. Small reported the following:

- The Site Plan and Landscape Plan for Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School was approved by the Planning Commission with conditions.
- Bosley House (510 S. Main Street) was approved by the Planning Commission for an expansion on the back of the building.
- Hickory Flats is pending for the Board of Appeals. They are asking for a variance for building height and a variance to park less than 50 percent on site.
- 133 Alice Anne Street is pending for the Board of Appeals for a variance to make the single-family home into a two-family home.
- Klein's ShopRite has submitted for an expansion of their loading docks (pending Commissioner approval of their rezoning).

- 13 rezoning applications will come before the Commissioners for approval at a public hearing on May 2.
- Office Street Pocket Park will begin when the County is finished repointing brick at 18 Office Street.
- Homestead Park construction is expected to begin in late summer.

### Subcommittee Updates

#### **Main Street Focus Group**

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the Main Street Focus Group has decided to put the purchase of Main Street on hold and instead focus on identifying activities that will populate closure opportunities on Main Street. The Town will assist and partner with any organizations who are interested in creating festival-type events on Main Street. She advised that Chris Street met with the Commissioners on April 12 to inform them that the goal is to create activities on Main Street. Ms. Heidenreich advised that Jesse Bane believes that there is no limit to the number of closure requests for events that could be held on Main Street.

#### **Traffic Safety**

Mr. Boyle advised that March-October is a time period for many pedestrian concerns, so now is the time to look at traffic safety. He advised that the Police Department has been making efforts to stop distracted driving and other violations. Mr. Boyle advised that he has been hearing from others about 18 wheelers on Main Street.

Mr. Small advised that he will be meeting with the Deputy Secretary of Transportation at MML (Maryland Municipal League) and asked the members to give him their top priority issues. Ms. Dickey advised that the yellow lights are too high at the crosswalk at Independent Brewing Co. (IBC). Mr. Kennedy noted that the Ma and Pa Trail connection means more people are crossing at IBC. Ms. Falcone inquired if a police officer could be placed at IBC to draw attention to the flashing lights at the crosswalk.

#### **High Density Housing**

Ms. Heidenreich advised that Chris Streett would like to reanalyze the 2016 Camoin Study and take the results and hire an independent contractor to do a study to look at where housing could be

added. Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Town would like to get the younger demographic to stay in the Town of Bel Air rather than move to other municipalities.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that Chris Streett has said that there is a challenge with the slow development approval process. Mr. Small advised that the development process involves talking to DPW and Planning, obtaining stormwater management concept approval and then submitting to the Planning Commission. He advised that it takes one (1) month to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and then the development is ready to go to engineering. Mr. Small advised that the Town uses the County to review stormwater, which takes eight (8) weeks. Mr. Glidden advised that the minimum turnaround for stormwater review is six (6) weeks. He advised that there are three (3) stages of approval with two (2) reviews at each stage, and it could take 36 weeks for stormwater review. Mr. Glidden advised that the Town follows State law for the stormwater review process.

Mr. Kelly commented that the Town has an excellent Planning Commission, and he commended them for the wonderful job they did in representing the Town in regard to the plans for the new Homestead-Wakefield Elementary project.

### **Routes 1 & 24 and Incentives**

Ms. Heidenreich advised that developer SJ Collins informed that there will be five (5) retail spaces built along Tollgate Road at Harford Mall. Mr. Glidden advised that they have the ability to do more than that, but it is likely to be five (5) retailers on the Tollgate Road side, the grocery store and 1-2 retailers between the grocery store and the Mall.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that an earlier traffic study identified Routes 1 & 24 as a failing intersection in the future and advised that the subcommittee does not want to see an overpass built because it would hinder pedestrian traffic. Mr. Small informed that the 2015 study does not propose an overpass, but it does propose a complicated arrangement of lanes. He advised that this would be out 30 years. Mr. Small advised that a quick fix would be a dedicated right through lane from Route 24 onto Route 1. Mr. Boyle advised that a pedestrian walkway over Route 24 would be much better than a vehicle overpass.

Mr. McNulty advised that the Town needs to put together incentives for another large use because it is important to the growth of Bel Air. Ms. Chance advised that large corporations are looking for incentives, and they will go elsewhere if Bel Air does not offer them.

## **Office Street and Burns Alley Pocket Park**

Mr. Small reported that he attended a meeting today with consultants regarding turning Burns Alley into a pedestrian mall. He advised that Burns Alley is at the center of traffic in that area, and it could be reimagined and used as restaurant, retail or event space. Mr. Small advised that the area has three (3) landowners, including the Town, the County and private landowners. He advised that the Sheriff's Office is open to many things, including removing the gas pumps. Mr. Small advised that the private landowners were not in attendance, so another meeting will be required. He advised that service and refuse/recycling pickup will need to stay in Burns Alley.

Mr. Small advised that Office Street Pocket Park will begin in the next couple of weeks and be complete by the end of June.

## Commercial Real Estate & Retailers Forum: Progress Report/Presentation

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the agenda will include parking, vacancies and a follow-up from last year's forum. Ms. Robertson reported that she received two (2) requests to add homelessness to the agenda. Ms. Heidenreich informed that there will be updates from the Downtown Alliance and the ECDC subcommittees and a Q&A segment.

## **ORGANIZATION UPDATES:**

### Harford County OCED

Mr. Andrews reported the following:

The County held the quarterly Economic Development Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday, and he offered an update on the Town of Bel Air.

## **Industrial Manufacturing/Distribution Sector**

The County receives numerous requests daily, and the 16 percent industrial vacancy rate is misleading because those sites are either under contract or about to be signed. The vacancy rate is 2 percent realistically.

## **Defense Sector**

There is still a lag at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) because contractors will have flexibility to work from home, and this affects the retail dynamic, hotels and tourism grant funding.

## **Retail Sector**

The County has held over 40 ribbon cuttings over the last 3 ½ months.

## **Legislative**

The session ended Monday. The proposed \$300.00 reimbursement to EMS per trip for public/private ambulances did not pass. The reimbursement will be \$150.00. The proposed 15-16 percent highway revenue reimbursement did not pass. It was raised from 3 percent to 5 percent.

## Bel Air Downtown Alliance

Ms. Falcone reported the following:

- First Fridays will return in May. MaGerks and Vagabond food trucks will be at First Fridays.
- The Belle Aire Market returns in May. The Market can fit 40 vendors, and 27 have signed so far. 111 Main is considering providing food for the Belle Air Market.
- The first meeting for the BBQ Bash was held at the end of March.
- The Harford County Tourism Grant application was submitted.
- The Alliance is working with the Town to submit the Main Street Improvement and Technical Assistance Grant application to the State.
- The Community Safety Works Grant awarded \$100,000.00 to the Alliance to use for cameras in the parking garage and possibly more barricades for events.
- The drop-in desks for the co-working space are still on the ship in the harbor.
- Music on Main has been updated. One speaker that was accidentally installed in front of the courthouse has been moved to the Spenceola building. There was a faulty GFCI (ground fault circuit interruptor) in front of Sunny Day Café. The playlist for the full year is almost complete.
- The Hold Harmless Agreement with Harford Mutual has been finalized for the pocket park on Bond Street.
- The Alliance is now fully staffed.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### Town Commissioners Retreat: Event Report

Ms. Heidenreich reported that the Commissioners discussed crosswalk safety, pedestrian safety on Main Street and Lee Street, and speeding on Main Street. The Commissioners also discussed zoning matters, high density housing, the MacPhail Road connection and ARPA funding projects.

Hickory Flats Project: Discussion and Support Letter

Ms. Heidenreich advised that developer Brad Shapiro has asked ECDC for a letter of support to submit to the Board of Appeals. She advised that she will email the members to ask them to vote confidentially whether they support the project or not. The letter would indicate the number of members who support the project and the number of those opposed.

Mr. Small advised that the developer is requesting a variance for a 49 1/2' building height. The current limit is 45'. They also are requesting a variance for a higher percentage of offsite parking, which currently has a limit of 50 offsite parking spots.

Annual Awards: Confirm Date and Revise Archer-Bull Criteria

After learning that a MML meeting is scheduled at the Armory on October 20, Ms. Heidenreich advised that the Annual Awards will be scheduled on October 27.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that a discussion about the criteria for the Archer-Bull Award should be tabled for the next ECDC meeting.

Other

The members present agreed that a social should be scheduled at IBC after the next regular ECDC meeting.

Mr. Andrews informed that he vacationed at a resort in Mexico that solved noise issues by giving headphones to guests at the resort. The guests could then tune in to three (3) available channels and dance while not disturbing guests sleeping at the resort. He suggested this as a possible solution to the noise complaints at IBC.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Boyle moved and Ms. Dickey seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

The motion carried.

