

**MINUTES
ESSEX COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MAY 1, 2025**

A meeting of the Economic Development Authority of Essex County was held on the 1st day of May, 2025, with the following present:

Present:

Lisa S. Andrews, Chair
William A. Croxton, Vice Chair
David Holt - Secretary
Jamie Segar
Victor Burrell – Treasurer
Woodie Walker –Director of Economic Development

Absent:

Skip Weiss

Also present:

Chris Rose – Rappahannock Times
Lou Spencer
Tommy Blackwell
Cupper Dickenson - HDT
Sarah Oldaker - Program Manager GO VA Region 6

RE: CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lisa Andrews called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. A quorum was met.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made for approval of March 5, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion was seconded.
Ayes: 5, Nays: 0

Motion was made to approve the March 10, 2025 conference call meeting with Consociate Media regarding a grant application. Motion was seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0

RE: TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Burrell reported that the checking account balance is \$27,216.44 The 12-month CD value is \$16,507.57 Interest on the CD that matured on 2/13/25 totaled \$201.80. The total fund balance is \$43,724.01.

RE: GUEST SPEAKER – Sarah Oldaker, Program Manager GO VA Region 6

Ms. Oldaker noted that GO VA is short for the Growth and Opportunity Fund, which was formed by statute in 2016. There are nine Regions and Essex is Region 6. GO VA promotes collaborative economic development, with the purpose of engaging local governments and businesses.

Regional partners include schools, community colleges, universities, nonprofits and workforce development boards.

Region 6 recently held a summit to bring stakeholders in the region together to discuss how to deliver higher paying jobs in targeted industries in our region. Also discussed was increasing regional collaboration.

Ms. Oldaker also noted that local government entities and organizations working on behalf of the local government are eligible for grants. She also noted that over 50% of the regional council is made up of private industry members.

A key area of current emphasis is site development. The region is trying to upgrade more business ready sites to tiers three four and five.

There is an update to strategy being undertaken and currently the priority industry clusters for Region 6 are aquaculture, seafood, wood products, paper manufacturing, distribution, logistics and IT data centers. Currently, the largest projects underway are in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services area.

Areas that GO VA does not fund are tourism, scholarships, tuition, credentials or K-5 schools

RE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR REPORT – Woodie Walker

Mr. Walker reviewed his activity report, which is attached.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Historic Downtown Tappahannock (HDT):

Ms. Dickenson reported that Restaurant week was successful and the EDA's support was appreciated.

Soul on the River will be on May 10th. Movies on the River will be launching on May 24 at River Park.

Downtown Dollars has distributed all of the free tourism dollars, but HDT is still selling the cards and encouraging their use.

Board of Supervisors:

Industrial Development:

Mr. Weiss noted that review of the property adjacent to the airport had topographic concerns and may not be a viable location for an industrial park. Mr. Croxton and Ms. Andrews will discuss opportunities with the Airport Authority.

Chamber of Commerce/Town Council:

The Chamber is holding a meeting at Java Jacks on May 20, at 8:00 am. The Chamber is also keeping involved with programs like the Rise and Fall Festival and Summer Reads.

FY 25-26 Budgets:

Ms. Andrews reported that the Supervisors approved our \$90,000 budget request.

Tourism:

VA250 – Mr. Holt submitted a report on the VA250 and the Rise and Fall Festival. Items of note:

- The Chesapeake Gateways grant is still pending
- One article on the Rise and Fall Festival has been published and a press release will be forthcoming
- The committee is considering getting a booth at the Farmer's Market to increase visibility
- Consideration is being given to expanding the book fair at the event and include local crafts
- We are still in search of additional musical groups – e.g., Rappahannock Tribe Maskpow Drum and Dancing Group
- We are also exploring having an environmental segment within the program, possibly the Friends of the Rappahannock
- Possibly a “puppy parade” on Prince Street

Recreation Facilities:

Mr. Segar reported on his research of sports facilities. He toured a York county facility and researched the New Post facility just outside of Fredericksburg. In addition, he noted that the King George facility (Sealston) was built when Tim Smith was in the Parks and Recreation department.

Mr. Segar also noted that each of the facilities were built to serve their communities and also used for tournaments. He also stated that it is important to understand the needs and desires of the Essex County populace as we consider improvements at Rotary Poor House Park.

Several people are meeting with Kay Carlton at the site on Sunday May, 5 to tour the park.

Housing:

Mr. Holt reported that Habitat is having “Brown Bag” lunch Zoom calls each Friday through the end of May for builders. He also requested that members pass that information along to builders they may know.

Big opportunities for Habitat are infilling lots in existing communities, foreclosed housing and county owned parcels. Mr. Holt will contact Planning and Zoning to explore that further.

Business Outreach

Mr. Croxton and Mr. Walker met with Caret Cellars and Wind Vineyards. Feedback from the owners was that the county could provide better support. It was suggested that we may want to provide kiosks and brochures for them. The EDA is also providing assistance in tapping into VTC marketing programs.

Mr. Walker noted that following the meetings with the lumber yards, a meeting has been setup with a pallet manufacturer about the possibility of locating facilities in Essex.

Tappahannock Rotary

Mr. Burrell reported that the Rotary will have Mr. Craig Shirley at the May 8th meeting. He and Mr. Karl Strock will be presenting on VE Day.

RE: NEW BUSINESS

VEDP Industrial Revitalization Fund Opportunity

Mr. Walker reported on the fund being offered:

The [Industrial Revitalization Fund](#) (IRF) leverages local and private resources to achieve market-driven redevelopment of vacant and deteriorated industrial and commercial properties. The program is targeted toward vacant structures whose poor condition creates physical and economic blight to the surrounding area in which the structure is located. Eligible properties include those formerly used for manufacturing, warehousing, mining, transportation and power production, as well as large-scale white elephant structures, such as department stores, theaters, hotels and shopping centers. Structures whose proposed end use will be solely residential are not eligible.

*The next round of funding for FY26 IRF implementation grants will open on April 1, 2025, and applications will be **due on May 31, 2025.***

RE: CLOSED SESSION

No closed session

RE: NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, May 1 2025 at 9:00AM.

RE: ACTION ITEMS

- Mr. Holt to reach out to Planning on Commercial Properties
- Messrs. Segar and Holt to request support from the BOS for EDA leading the RPHP project

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made at 11:25 am. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0

Secretary, David Holt