

St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission

Commissioner's Meeting Room, Chesapeake Bldg.

41770 Baldrige St., Leonardtown, Maryland

Wednesday, August 21, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The August 21, 2024 Meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 6:00 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Members in attendance were:

Curtis Brown

Mahree Annan

Dr. Christine Bergmark

Dr. Silvio Borrero

Leona Charles

Dr. Asif U Dowla

Dr. Dale Moore

Elizabeth Torgerson

Guests in attendance included:

Chris Kaselemis, Director, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development

Kellie Hinkle, Deputy Director, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development

Ben Cohen, Development Facilitator, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development

Priscilla Leitch, Agriculture & Seafood Manager, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development

Ben Beale, St. Mary's County Extension

Tre' Johnsen, President Southern Maryland Mountain Bikers

Andrews Gardiner, Vice President Southern Maryland Mountain Bikers

Joey Sikorski, Member at Large Southern Maryland Mountain Bikers

Members not in attendance

Lisa Colavito

Gerald Meyerman

Lilyanne Ohanesian

Trisha Post

Frederick Stewart

Richard Tarr

III. Approval of Minutes

Curtis Brown motioned to approve the Minutes of the October 28, 2023, January 17, 2024 and April 17, 2024, seconded by Dr. Christine Bergmark.

Yea: Mahree Annan, Dr. Christine Bergmark, Dr. Silvio Borrero, Curtis Brown, Leona Charles, Dr. Asif U Dowla, Dr. Dale Moore, Elizabeth Torgerson

IV. Announcements

Chris Kaselemis, Director of St. Mary's County DED, updated the Board in staff changes in DED. Upgraded an administrative position to an Economic Development Specialist which allows for the department to have more specialized positions:

Katherine Stromont will focus on Business Attraction and AeroPark Development

Lee Greely will focus on Business Retraction and Expansion

Emily Lacey will focus on Agriculture, Seafood and Small Businesses

Katrine Heuer will focus on Marketing and Communications

The next St. Mary's County Young Professionals After Hours Event will be held on September 24, 2024 from 5 pm until 7 pm at Chesapeake Staging and Interiors. The group facilitate a space for young professionals to make connections among themselves.

The St. Mary's Around the World campaign is now live. This initiative showcases local business that are doing work beyond St. Mary's County.

Elizabeth Torgerson will be resigning from the St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission due to relocating to Northern Virginia.

V. CEDS Related Local Agriculture, Forestry, and Seafood Project Updates

Priscilla Leitch introduced Ben Beale, Extension Educator for the University of Maryland, who gave a presentation about the 2022 Agriculture Census Update.

Ben Beale gave a presentation to the Board titled "Latest Census Show Strong Standing St. Mary's County Agriculture." Mr. Beale stated that every five years farmers are asked to spend some time responding to the Agricultural Census. The Census provides the best picture of agricultural landscape with a uniform set of data for every county in the country. In February of 2024, USDA released the 2022 Census data. Overall, the news is very good. The number of farms increased substantially in the last five years, from 615 farms in 2017 to 656 farms in 2022. Land in farms acreage also increased from 61,803 acres in 2017 to 64,380 acres in 2022. USDA estimated the market value for agricultural land decreased in the last 5 years from \$9,949 per acre in 2017 to \$8,652 per acre in 2022. St. Mary's County has approximately 229,533 acres of land area, of which 28% is devoted to farms. The value of total sales from farms also increased substantially from \$25.95 million in 2017 to \$35.27 million in 2022. The majority of farms sales (\$29.2 million) came from crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops. Sales of vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes increased substantially in St. Mary's County from \$2.89 million in 2017 to \$4.50 million in 2022. Subsequently, the number of vegetable farms decreased during the same period from 101 in 2017 to 77 in 2022. Nursery, greenhouse floriculture and sod continue to play a major role in St. Mary's County agriculture with 50 farms producing \$2.69 million in sales in 2022, which was very similar to 2017 with 51 farms producing \$2.40 million in sales. Livestock and poultry statistics also remained stable, with 271 farms producing sales of \$5.49 million in 2017 to 286 farms producing sales of \$6.10 million in 2022. The census indicates there are 1,194 agricultural producers in St. Mary's County with 172 of those being defined as young producers (under the age of 34.)

VI. CEDS Related Rural Development & Quality of Place Project Updates

Southern Maryland Mountain Bikers (SMMB)

Tre' Johnsen, President SMMB, Andrews Gardiner, Vice President SMMB, Joey Sikorski, Member at Large SMMB

Mr. Johnson stated that the SMMB was formally established in 2012 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, who builds and maintains trails (mostly at St. Mary's River State Park) and hosts rides throughout St. Mary's County to foster and create a mountain bike community. There are currently 64 formal members who pay dues which covers expenses to build/maintain trails and provide insurance for the organized rides.

Chesapeake Bay Ferry Study Final Report

Ben Cohen, Development Facilitator DED,

The purpose of the study was to take advantage of the Chesapeake Bay which is extremely underutilized. The Chesapeake Bay is steeped in maritime history, including a time when water ferry transportation drove the development and success of our coastal communities. The purpose of the Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study is to evaluate the potential for a new passenger ferry service that could stimulate economic

growth within twenty-one (21) destinations on the Bay. The goal of this passenger ferry system will be to provide improved access to the Bay, provide new water transportation connectivity options, and to promote enhanced, sustainable, tourism opportunities throughout the region.

VIII. Updates

Dr. Christine Bergmark reminded the Commission Members of the St. Mary's County Chamber State of the County on September 10, 2024 and the Taste of St. Mary's fundraising event that will be held on September 28, 2024.

Dr. Dale Moore invited the Commission Members to the Southern Maryland Navy Alliance Annual Dinner on September 19, 2024

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Curtis Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Elizabeth Torgerson

Yea: Mahree Annan, Dr. Christine Bergmark, Dr. Silvio Borrero, Curtis Brown, Leona Charles, Dr. Asif U Dowla, Dr. Dale Moore, Elizabeth Torgerson

Minutes taken by Lisa Ledman, DED.