

Washington County Economic Development Commission

Regular Commission Meeting May 8, 2014

The regular meeting of the Washington County Economic Development Commission (EDC) was held at 100 West Washington Street, Room 225. The following members were present: Jef Bohn (Secretary), Hugh Breslin, Ryan Daughtridge, Ed Lough, Stu Mullendore, Janet Stiles Fulton, and Pete Thomas. Members not in attendance included Dan Pheil (Chair), Paul Crampton (Vice Chair), Robert Jeffers, Kate Rader, and Wade Watson.

Ex-Officio members attending were Terry Baker and William McKinley, Commissioners for Washington County; Kristin Aleshire and Donald Munson, Council Members for the City of Hagerstown; Jill Frick, Economic Development Manager for the City of Hagerstown; Sandy Mehalko, Regional Director for the Small Business Technology & Development Center (SBTDC); and Julie Rohm, General Manager of the Valley Mall. Also in attendance were James Jenkins, Manager for the Washington County Department of Public Relations and Community Affairs; Tabitha Porterfield, Marketing Specialist for the Washington County Department of Public Relations and Community Affairs; Sarah Sprecher, Assistant County Administrator for Washington County; Robert Boras, Project Manager for PenMar Development Corporation; and Washington County Department of Business Development staff Carmen Harbaugh, Bob Mandley, and Linda Spence.

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Jef Bohn.

Approval of the Order of Business – Stu Mullendore made a motion to approve the Order of Business for May 8, 2014 that was seconded by Janet Stiles Fulton and approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes – Ed Lough motioned to approve the meeting minutes of April 10, 2014 as presented, the motion was seconded by Stu Mullendore and approved by unanimous vote.

Presentation by Robert Boras – Jef Bohn introduced and welcomed Robert Boras, Project Manager for PenMar Development Corporation (PMDC). He is an accomplished developer and architect with experience in re-development projects such as the Hippodrome in Baltimore, MD. His duty at PenMar is to redevelop the Fort and create jobs within 3 years. Mr. Boras noted prior to selling the Fort back to PMDC, Corporate Office Properties Trust (COPT) invested nearly \$27M to redevelop it; they razed several dilapidated buildings, renovated buildings, rebuilt the Community Center, removed hazardous waste, and more. While most of the “finger” buildings do not currently have water and sewer infrastructure, the connections are within reach. He emphasized the need to cultivate local and State partners to share ideas and participate in this 3-year project. Commissioner Callahan praised Mr. Boras’ quiet humility and noted the PMDC Board has full confidence in his ability to accomplish its goal.

Elected Officials’ Comments – Commissioner Baker noted this week is Educators, Nurses and Correctional Officers’ Week. He thanked County Administrator, Greg Murray for a well prepared Public Hearing regarding the County’s proposed Fiscal Year 2015 budget. Commissioner McKinley stated only six people spoke at the hearing, a couple from HCC requesting additional funding, Fire & Rescue representatives, and from an individual supporting the Greater Hagerstown Committee’s request to support their “Promise” program to help fund post-secondary education for County high school graduates. Council Member Aleshire explained the City of Hagerstown renounced its moratorium on healthcare and social service-type facilities in the downtown core until a more refined ordinance can be developed. He stated the recruitment process for a new City Administrator is underway due to Bruce Zimmerman’s pending retirement May 2015. Council Member Aleshire mentioned he submitted a list of 20 potential budgetary cuts to reduce a proposed tax rate increase from \$0.11 to \$0.06. Council Member Munson noted City staff is making a good effort to address concerns on the

healthcare facility ordinance. He commended Herald-Mail reporter, Holly Shok on a recent article about the City of Hagerstown, stating it was very accurate and truthful.

Executive Committee – Jef Bohn announced the EDC’s Annual meeting will be held June 12, 2014. A new Slate of Officers will be determined at that meeting. He stated Ed Lough, Dan Pheil, and Wade Watson are eligible for reappointment; Ed and Wade can be reappointed to serve a first, three-year term, while Dan is eligible to be reappointed for a second, three-year term. Mr. Bohn noted Stu Mullendore’s term as an At Large representative on the EDC Board expires June 30, 2014. A list of potential candidates to fill this position has been provided by the County Clerk’s office and will be shared with members. He asked members to provide thoughts on the list of candidates and provide the Executive Committee with other names for consideration. The Skills Matrix will be forwarded to members to help determine potential skills needed for new members. Comments are requested by the next Executive Committee meeting, scheduled for June 2. Sarah Sprecher reported interviews for the vacant Business Development Director’s position are going well; of the 14 applicants, six have already been interviewed and another 3 are scheduled. She is hopeful an offer will be accepted mid-June and on board by July 1. Stu Mullendore reported the final draft of the Top Five Strategic Priorities report has been completed and was previously distributed to voting EDC Board members for review. He noted the report did not address the EDC Organizational Structure as it was already in place. *Hugh Breslin made a motion to provide a copy of the final draft to the Mayor, City Council, and the BOCC prior to its formal presentation. The motion was seconded by Janet Stiles Fulton. After discussion the motion was passed unanimously. Hugh Breslin made a motion to accept the final Top Five Strategic Priorities draft report as presented; the motion was seconded by Ed Lough, and passed by unanimous vote.* Members were asked not to share the document until the BOCC has had an opportunity to review its contents.

Ag Marketing Advisory Committee – Janet Stiles Fulton reported Washington County, MD farmers have implemented a number of Best Management Practices to help protect the environment including monitoring surface and ground waters, and noted MDE now has the authority to monitor rain puddles for potential contaminants. She noted a recent Senate Bill would allow for research and development of insect resistant crops through genetically modified organisms or GMOs. Mrs. Stiles Fulton announced the Farm Bill also passed and it is unclear of its impact yet on Washington County. She announced the Mobile Agriculture Trailer is making its rounds to every elementary school in the County to bring awareness about where food really comes from; the Ag Expo & Fair is scheduled for the week of July 19-26; many careers and job opportunities are available in Washington County; and MDE inserted some language in the COMAR Regulations that may affect the cost of doing business in the State.

City Center Committee – Nothing to report.

Marketing & Public Relations Committee – Nothing to report.

Small Business Development Committee – Nothing to report.

Workforce Development Committee – Pete Thomas stated the committee recently met at the Board of Education’s new central office facility and discussed career options for students with George Phillips, Wade Watson, Dan Pheil and other members of the committee. Mr. Thomas reported he was the emcee at the Career Technology Center’s Awards of Excellence event.

Celebration of Business Taskforce – Hugh Breslin expressed appreciation to taskforce members for a successful *Celebration of Business* event this year. The group was able to secure more than \$22,200 in sponsorship, hold expenses to approximately \$19,800, and have a reserve balance of just over \$20,300. He noted 181 business representatives attended the event and the no-show rate was only 12 percent. A suggestion was made to place more emphasis on companies being honored by including a video presentation about their business or a short bio in a handout.

Old Business – Julie Rohm provided members with a retail sales update mentioning sales for 2013 were flat to up for most retailers; food sales were up in March; and ecommerce sales versus brick-and-mortar were up in April. The average Easter basket this year cost consumers an average of \$137 per basket. Stores to watch in the coming months include Game Stop, Target, J.C. Penney, and Forever 21. Ms. Rohm announced Brandi Coffey has been hired as the new manager for the Premium Outlets. She expressed appreciation for the prompt manner in which the County’s Permit Office handled the Shoney’s building demo permit and construction permit for the new Noodle & Co. restaurant. Ms. Rohm stated retailers are using Omni-Channel Retailing to reach a broader group of consumers. Omni-Channel Retailing is the evolution of multi-channel retailing, but is concentrated more on a seamless approach to the consumer experience through all available shopping channels, i.e. mobile internet devices, computers, brick-and-mortar, television, radio, direct mail, catalog and so on. Retailers are meeting the new customer demands by deploying specialized supply chain strategy software. Commissioner Callahan inquired about the status of the new director for the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Ms. Rohm stated more than 62 applications were received and the top 7 candidates will be granted interviews. The goal is to have someone on board by July 1. The new director will be strongly encouraged to work hand-in-hand with the Business Development Director. Sarah Sprecher commented on the Eggs and Issues presentation held on May 7 regarding economic and business development. She hoped those in attendance felt a sense of pride following the presentation because good things are happening in Washington County. Acknowledging that several board members were unable to attend, Greg Murray requested time at the June meeting be set aside to review the presentation. Jef Bohn mentioned staff recently published its 2014 Business & Industry Directory, the 2014 Economic Data Summary, and are creating a newsletter to be published in the coming months.

New Business – Jef Bohn announced Janice Riley will make a presentation at the July Board meeting on what good things are happening at the Technical Innovation Center.

Adjournment – Pete Thomas made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Ed Lough. Hearing no discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Linda Spence, Business Support Specialist
Department of Business Development