

## Washington County Economic Development Commission

### Regular Commission Meeting November 14, 2013

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: Dan Pheil (Chair), Paul Crampton (Vice Chair), Jef Bohn (Secretary), Hugh Breslin, Ryan Daughtridge, Bob Jeffers, Ed Lough, Stu Mullendore, Janet Stiles Fulton, and Pete Thomas. Kate Rader was excused from the meeting.

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 Estavillo, 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 attending were Greg Murray, Administrator for Washington County; Sam Devaram, Washington County Counselor for SBTDC; Tabitha Porterfield, Marketing Specialist for Washington County Public Relations and Community Affairs; Washington County Department of Business Development staff Carmen Harbaugh, Bob Mandley, and Linda Spence.

*Call to Order* – The meeting was called to order by Dan Pheil.

*Approval of the Order of Business* – Paul Crampton made a motion to approve the Order of Business for November 14, 2013, modifying the order to include a report under “Old Business” regarding the Hotel/Motel Tax by Greg Murray. The motion was seconded by Pete Thomas and approved unanimously.

*Approval of Minutes* – Jef Bohn motioned to approve the meeting minutes of October 10, 2013 as presented, the motion was seconded by Pete Thomas and approved unanimously.

*Elected Officials’ Comments* – Commissioner McKinley commented on the decrease in the unemployment rate from 10.12% in 2009 to 7.9% in 2013, which equates to approximately 1,800 more workers being employed now as compared to the same timeframe four years ago. Council Member Munson noted the City of Hagerstown is considering imposing a “Crime-Free” lease on all City landlords, and the Chief of Police announced plans to increase neighborhood policing programs.

*Executive Committee* – Dan Pheil stated he appeared before the BOCC to discuss the vacant At Large position on the EDC board. The full board did not have an opportunity to discuss potential candidates or make a recommendation therefore he requested the BOCC delay vote and/or utilize the EDC’s Skills Matrix to ensure an appropriate mix of skills would complement existing member skills. Mr. Pheil reported he and Bob Mandley attended a dinner meeting with representatives from the Port of Baltimore and stated Washington County remains in limbo on whether or not the “Rain Tax” would affect the county. Brien Poffenberger also attended the meeting and will prove to be an asset in working through this matter from a political standpoint. He stated Sandy Mehalko recently provided the committee with a demonstration of the “Triple Bottom Line” software program, designed to assist in determining economic development projects’ return on investment and offered free assistance if staff determined it useful. It was announced Neal Glessner is working to construct a \$3-4M hospice house and is seeking approximately 3-4 acres of donated land for the project. Mr. Pheil explained he recently submitted a letter in support of HCC applying for an EARN Grant. Stu Mullendore stated the application period and supporting documentation timeframe expired before he received a copy of the *Request for Information* for the EARN program. Pete Thomas mentioned the State of Maryland held a series of meetings with training providers prior to providers releasing their request for support to the public.

*Ag Marketing Advisory Committee* – Janet Stiles Fulton, as a participant on the Governor’s Taskforce for Dairy, reported she expressed great concern with the State’s new “Phosphorus Management” tool which is mandated

without accurate recording of phosphorous output. Later in the meeting, Greg Murray also commented on Maryland Department of the Environment issues related to nitrogen and phosphorous regulations. The County has been heavily involved in making its concern(s) about regulations known for quite a number of years and will continue to monitor the situation and seek ways to satisfy the Governor's directive. On behalf of Leslie Hart, Ms. Stiles Fulton noted the following agricultural marketing and business development initiatives are underway, development of a Farm Brochure, an Agricultural Business Forum and Agronomy Day is scheduled for December 5 at the Ag Education Center, an Agricultural Marketing Advisory Committee meeting is planned for November 26, the Quilt Block Barn program is continuing, StartUP Maryland's selection of the "Great 8" will be determined at the TEDCO Expo on November 18, and the 2014 season of Annie's Project will begin in January.

*City Center Committee* – Ed Lough informed members the committee identified six (6) key issues they will concentrate their efforts on; 1) construction of a parking deck to the rear of the Columbia Bank lot off of Antietam Street, 2) extend the Maryland Theatre facility out to the sidewalk, 3) support the transformation of the former Barnwood Books property, 4) expansion of the University System of Maryland – Hagerstown, 5) support the purchase of the building located between the Barbara Ingram School of the Arts and the Maryland Theatre for possible school expansion, and 6) support the City of Hagerstown in achieving Main Street status. In addition, members are interested in learning more about a west coast baseball organization, the Bakersfield Blaze, who desires to join the Carolina League on the east coast, naming Hagerstown as one of three possible relocation spots on the east coast in a recent news article. He noted the pending sale of the Alexander House is of concern due to the possible extension of the HAP agreement for low-income housing to be extended 20-30 years beyond the current expiration date of 2019.

*Infrastructure and Site Development Committee* – Bob Mandley stated the final *Infrastructure Needs Assessment Report* was well received when it was presented to the public during a recent BOCC meeting. Paul Crampton agreed to serve as committee chair and will determine what the next step will be going forward.

*Marketing & Public Relations Committee* – Stu Mullendore is working on the final report to update the Commissioners on the Top Five Strategic Priorities and would seek consensus from the EDC prior to its presentation. He explained he is working with Mayor Gysberts on a proposed piece of legislature that may prove to be very beneficial for the City of Hagerstown and hopes to share more details next month.

*Small Business Development Committee* – Jef Bohn reported a sub-committee of the *Small Business Development Committee* recently developed a webpage on the EDC's website. The page is entitled "Local Business Resources" and allows start-up and existing businesses with the necessary information to make decisions about locating or growing in Washington County. With only a few minor tweaks remaining, the page is now live and will be available for partner agencies to use on their respective websites. Stu Mullendore requested Mr. Bohn submit the committee's activity as a report that can be used as an amendment to the Top Five Strategic Priorities.

*Workforce Development Committee* – Pete Thomas explained he recently presented the "Workforce Development in Transition" report to members of the Executive Committee. As part of the Top Five Strategic Priorities, this report identifies recessionary effects on workforce in the past five years, who the available jobseekers are, what are the job openings, compares work – workforce – and training needs, and responds to skill shortages. It also addresses the apparent lack of properly skilled and experienced workers that leave many jobs unfilled. And, the lack of "soft skills" and advanced skills are leaving many workers unemployed. Recommendations include the provision of marketing assistance for employers needing assemblers, machine operators and material handling employees; the need to emphasize and assist in developing a "Soft Skills" program for jobseekers as well as current employees; work with the school system (middle and high school, and college students) to improve the educational level and attainment; support efforts to increase literacy in Washington County, and to assist in promoting life-long learning for workers, students and the general public. A copy of the report is available by contacting the Department of Business Development.

*Celebration of Business Taskforce* – Hugh Breslin announced he agreed to “chair” the taskforce. The event has been scheduled for April 15, 2014 at Fountain Head Country Club. The group has a potential speaker lined up but also have identified other options. If interested in joining the taskforce the next planning meeting has been scheduled for December 18.

*Old Business* – Greg Murray provided members with a copy of House Bill 1427 by the Washington County Delegation by which the Washington County Hotel Rental Tax was created. This bill increased the hotel rental tax in Washington County to 6%. Of the revenues from the tax, 45% would fund the Hagerstown/Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), and the rest will be placed in a special fund to be used only to develop tourism attractions, enhance economic development, and support cultural and recreational projects in the county. Municipalities in Washington County may apply to the BOCC to receive money from the fund for eligible projects within the municipality. Each year before adopting its annual budget, the CVB must hold a public hearing on its proposed budget. Beginning in 2001, the BOCC and the CVB must report to the county’s General Assembly delegations on the revenue generated from the hotel tax and the use of the revenues during the preceding year. The tax may not be used to build a stadium unless the Maryland Stadium Authority has developed a cost and impact plan and the Washington County Commissioners and the Hagerstown City Council have approved the plan. The county Senate and House delegations must also be given an opportunity to review and comment on the stadium plan. Mr. Murray also commented on accompanying documents e.g., Hotel Rental Tax Funding - Program Guidelines and Instructions, Hotel Rental Tax Funding – Grant Application, Guidelines for Distribution and Submission of Mandated Reports to the Maryland General Assembly, and the CVB Financial Report dated December 21, 2012. Questions regarding funding the Railway Lane project were answered by Greg Murray. Ron Bowers asked if the County was aware of what the CVB spends their funds on and Mr. Murray answered “no.” However others noted the CVB’s financial statement was attached for review.

*New Business* – Nothing to report.

*Closed Session* – *Stu Mullendore motioned to go into Closed Session to consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State in accordance with Section 10-508 of the Maryland State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The motion was seconded by Bob Jeffers. Hearing no discussion the motion to go into Closed Session was approved by unanimous vote.*

*Open Session* – *On a motion made by Ed Lough to return to Open Session and seconded by Bob Jeffers, the motion was unanimously approved. Present during Closed Session were Kristin Aleshire, Terry Baker, Jef Bohn, Hugh Breslin, Paul Crampton, Ryan Daughtridge, Jill Estavillo, Bob Jeffers, Ed Lough, Bill McKinley, Sandy Mehalko, Stuart Mullendore, Donald Munson, Greg Murray, Dan Pheil, Tabitha Porterfield, Julie Rohm, Janet Stiles Fulton, Pete Thomas, Carmen Harbaugh, Bob Mandley and Linda Spence.*

*Adjournment* – *Bob Jeffers made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Janet Stiles Fulton. Hearing no discussion, the meeting was adjourned.*



Business Support Specialist for Washington County  
Department of Business Development and  
Recording Clerk for the Economic Development Commission