



Washington County Economic Development Commission

April 13, 2017

The regular meeting of the Washington County Economic Development Commission (EDC) was held at 100 West Washington Street, Suite 1401. The following members were present: Julie Rohm (Chair), Michael Reyka (Secretary), Gary Bockrath, Mike Fitzgerald, Jim Herbert, Theresa Shank, and Janet Stiles Fulton. Ex-Officio members in attendance included the Honorable Terry Baker, Commissioner for Washington County; the Honorable Robert Bruchey, Mayor for the City of Hagerstown; the Honorable Emily Keller, Council Member for the City of Hagerstown; and Jill Frick, Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of Hagerstown. Excused absences included Steve Blickenstaff, Hugh Breslin, Andrew Lobley, Ed Lough, Joshua Martin, and Greg Snook; absent were Commissioners John Barr, and LeRoy Myers.

Staff in attendance included Kassie Lewis (via conference call), Carmen Harbaugh, Leslie Hart, Bob Mandley, Lauren Pogue, Rob Slocum, Linda Spence, Sarah Sprecher, and Aaron Stoner. Also in attendance were Commissioner Wayne Keefer, Robert Bower, Kathy Maher, Paul Fulk, and Andrew Sargent.

Call to Order – Julie Rohm called the meeting to order.

Approval of the Agenda – A motion to approve the meeting agenda for April 13, 2017 was made by Gary Bockrath, seconded by Jim Herbert and unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes – Julie Rohm requested a motion to amend the meeting minutes of January 19, 2017. Under the Executive Committee Report, Ms. Rohm “requested a motion to nominate Gary Bockrath to fulfill a vacancy on the Executive Committee as Vice Chair...” The request was made in error due to the Vice Chair’s position currently being held by Ed Lough. The motion should have read “to appoint Gary Bockrath as a member of the Executive Committee.” *Janet Stiles Fulton made a motion to approve the amended minutes for January 19, 2017 as stated. The motion was seconded by Michael Reyka and approved by unanimous vote.* Ms. Rohm noted an amendment was made to the March 9, 2017 meeting minutes in regards to a statement made under the Director’s Report about a meeting and its purpose between Hagerstown Community College, Harvest, Inc., Kassie Lewis and Andrew Sargent. *Jim Herbert motioned to approve the amended meeting minutes for March 9, 2017, Theresa Shank seconded the motion, and the motion carried.*

Elected Officials’ Comments – Commissioner Baker looks forward to advancing economic development efforts. Commissioner Keefer appreciates being welcomed to the meeting and was inquisitive about the number of workers that were employed by EDC members’ collective businesses. Council Member Keller stated she is hearing positive feedback in the community regarding economic growth throughout the county. Mayor Bruchey commented on the City’s budget discussions. County Administrator, Rob Slocum stated he looks forward to working with the EDC.

City of Hagerstown Presentation – Permitting and Code Enforcement – Kathy Maher, Director of Planning and Code Administration for the City of Hagerstown, along with Paul Fulk, Inspection Manager provided an overview of the City’s response to concerns about the City’s permitting and inspection process. Enhancements to improve communication were developed. To streamline processes, on line permit application and instructions were developed; and step-by-step illustrated instructions have been created for repetitive projects such as decks, porches, garages, fences, etc. Meetings are being held with stakeholder groups to educate and gain feedback and project progress meetings are being conducted. Many other communication enhancements such as updates and changes to code administration are updated on the department’s website page, notices are sent to expiring permit holders, and a customer service survey was developed and is monitored, etc. Ms. Maher and Mr. Fulk

noted the City is committed to a business friendly approach to the permitting and inspection process and looks forward to continuous quality service improvement.

Executive Committee – Julie Rohm noted two additional candidate names are required in addition to Michael Reyka’s name to fulfill an At Large position.

City Center Committee – Michael Fitzgerald stated a very productive meeting was held last month and asked Jill Frick to provide an update. Ms. Frick noted a concept that Mr. Fitzgerald developed using data from residential properties that were sold to an investor, improved, and then sold to a homeowner within a relatively short timeframe. The question, based on an analysis of the subset of this data influencing a change in the assessed value, and is there additional tax revenue coming into the City. The concept of this idea is whether or not monies would be available to self-fund incentives to developers who buy, renovate and sell property to residential homeowners, not rental properties. She expressed gratitude for Mr. Fitzgerald’s efforts. Ms. Frick explained the broader goal of the committee is to profile downtown living and how it ties into the promotion of a Gigabit City and other investor promotions.

Infrastructure Committee – Jim Herbert noted the committee is focused on a Smart City grant, targeting a program that addresses opioid addiction. Opioid addiction is a major issue, nationally and locally and affects a broad range of community services. Interest in participating in the development of this grant includes the USM-H, Meritus Health, and Antietam Cable who has volunteered to be a major participant and will provide the communications infrastructure necessary. He plans to make a presentation in Washington, DC in June at a Smart City event. The National Science Foundation is sponsoring a grant program of more the \$1B. U.S. Ignite, a quasi-government has been allocated \$100M specifically for mid-sized communities as a lab for this type funding that include communities that have large broadband capabilities. He feels Hagerstown is the perfect fit for this program. Kassie Lewis noted that research has been done on other grants that have been awarded and it appears that opioid addiction is something that no one has tackled yet. This may be a big factor in terms of our attractiveness to be awarded a grant for such a horrendous national problem. If we were to receive funding, Washington County, MD could serve as a national model for other communities to undertake if we show success. Ms. Lewis noted the person involved in opioid addiction touches many agencies and there is no communication between them about the addicted person. Having this program in place through Smart City, agencies will be able to focus and share information to better serve and treat the individual. Julie Rohm requested that Council Member Emily Keller be included on the next meeting of the committee.

Project Status Report – Bob Mandley reported a copy of the Project Status Report for first quarter 2017 has been distributed. He noted Washington County has seen a slight increase in activity from the State of Maryland as well as interest from brokers have been realized during the first quarter of this year. Some projects are massive in size such as the Mackenzie II project requiring 20-80 acres of land, which has been referred to the Town of Hancock. This Mackenzie I project is interested in 1.2M square feet and is only interested in purchase. The broker identified seven potential sites and explains the client is still very interested in developing the project in Washington County, MD especially with the incentives provided and Governor Hogan’s initiatives for revitalizing the area and expanding I-81. A final package is under development for client review. He noted Dot Foods’ Board of Directors are reconsidering their needs and expect to hear from them in the next several days.

Gary Bockrath commented that at the end of the Legislative Session, they passed the *More Jobs for Marylanders Act*, which is a manufacturing incentive and specifically pointed out regions including Western Maryland. Details have not been disseminated yet and he encouraged the EDC/DBD to help promote and sell the program as soon as details are made available. Andrew Sargent agreed to provide the group with an update to this and other programs as soon as they are made known. He explained that the Partnership for Workforce Quality (PWQ) program is slated to receive additional funding and the State of Maryland’s “Open for Business” is being re-branded. Theresa Shank noted legislators awarded funding to community colleges for non-credit workforce development programs through the Department of Licenses, Labor, and Regulation (DLLR).

Jill Frick reported the City and County are working collectively on other projects listed on the First Quarter Report, e.g., Capital Data Centers, Antraquip Corporation, Cosmo Films. Additional projects we have been working on include Hager Watches and a potential training program for an apprenticeship for watch making, in partnership with the County and HCC as a training school. A new restaurant has been opened in downtown, Jerry's Pizza and Subs Sports Bar. It is the first of its kind in the State of Maryland and one they hope to replicate. The Historic District will hear a presentation on the demolition of the MacBaer building and support from the business community. The demolition is necessary for the MD Theatre to be expanded. She noted Pinnacle Foods is distributing product that is produced at their Frederick Street location. Ms. Frick mentioned the City and County met earlier this week regarding a joint marketing effort for a Gigabit City. In the next 30-60 days, a short video will be produced to promote the service. Leslie Hart reported that Agricultural Farm Brochure is in the process of being turned into an App. She commented that farmer's markets are starting up now and congratulated the City of Hagerstown on the development of a long-term lease for the Valley Co-Op to manage the City's Farmers Market.

Adjournment – Gary Bockrath made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Theresa Shank. Hearing no discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

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