



## Washington County Economic Development Commission

March 9, 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), Ed Lough (Vice Chair), Michael Reyka (Secretary), Steve Blickenstaff, Gary Bockrath, Hugh Breslin, Andrew Lobley, Joshua Martin, Theresa Shank, and Janet Stiles Fulton. Ex-Officio members in attendance were 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 Mike Fitzgerald, Jim Herbert and Greg Snook; absent were Commissioners Terry Baker, John Barr, and LeRoy Myers.

County staff in attendance included Kassie Lewis, Linda Spence, Carmen Harbaugh, Lauren Pogue, Phil Ridenour, Sarah Sprecher, and Aaron Stoner. Also in attendance were the Honorable Jeff Cline and the Honorable Wayne Keefer, commissioners for Washington County; 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 March 9, 2017 was made by Ed Lough, seconded by Janet Stiles Fulton and unanimously approved.

*Approval of Minutes* – Ed Lough motioned to approve the meeting minutes of January 19, 2017 as presented. The motion was seconded by Gary Bockrath and approved unanimously.

*Elected Officials' Comments* – Commissioner Keefer expressed appreciation to the EDC for their help in driving ideas that increase the tax base and those that provide jobs in the community. He urged members to reach out to him and/or other commissioners with suggestions that would move economic development efforts forward and to get involved in matters such as a review of tax increment financing policies, meetings with business owners, attend Board of County Commissioners meetings monthly or quarterly to explain why unemployment numbers decreased or why housing costs are up, etc. Commissioner Keefer mentioned the Hancock EDC is working to secure elder care for the Town of Hancock. Currently residents have to travel west to Cumberland or east to Williamsport or Hagerstown for care, making it difficult for family and friends to visit as often as they may like or need. He noted Kassie Lewis connected the Hancock EDC with the State Nursing Home Director, Paul Parker. As a result a meeting was held last week with a lady from a senior living solutions provider, along with Linda Spence of the DBD; David Smith, Town Manager of Hancock; Dr. Ralph Salvango, Hancock Town Mayor; and Ross Cook, Hancock EDC Chair. The provider has 1,100 facilities around the country and one of the largest facilities is located in Williamsport with approximately 110 beds. Although there is no guarantee this particular provider would open a facility in Hancock, he hopes Hancock would be its 1,101 facility! The group explored many possibilities such as a branch location in Hancock. Gary Bockrath asked what the Commissioners long term plan or strategy is and what their view of current economic development for the county is? Is it to recruit new business, large businesses, helping existing businesses grow, etc.? Is there a general view point of how the Commissioners look at the county's economy and what and where they would like see growth opportunities occur? Commissioner Keefer stated that perhaps the Commissioners need to meet more often with the EDC to help determine what the need is in a work group session. Commissioner Cline reiterated appreciation for EDC efforts noting the group is instrumental in developing businesses. He mentioned the Town of Williamsport and newly elected Mayor Green expressed support in relocating the C&O Canal Headquarters to Williamsport. He would like the EDC to assist in ensuring financial support is obtained to move the facility to Williamsport. Commissioner Cline mentioned how diligently the EDC worked to secure the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA) for Washington County, MD and feels its expertise could prove vital in

the Williamsport project as well. He was enthusiastic about the improvements to the aqueduct that have already had a positive impact by an increase in tourism for the Town. Council Member Emily Keller informed members the Mayor and Council recently formed a Code Compliance Review Committee to ensure businesses who want to come to Hagerstown have an easier time as they begin that process. The committee is made up of eight local architects, developers, and realtors, and four city staff, including her and Council Member Paul Corderman. They are meeting every two weeks for the first three months, and will then meet monthly thereafter. The first phase is to correct issues and then the group will focus on marketing efforts. Kassie Lewis suggested a joint marketing venture with the City. Ed Lough mentioned the need to increase home ownership downtown and to increase student housing which he feels would drive business to the area. Hugh Breslin noted Mike Fitzgerald, as part of the City Center Committee is working on a proposal to self-fund a program for developers who renovate housing for homeownership.

*Director's Report* – Julie Rohm noted it has been four years since the Strategic Economic Development Plan for Washington County, MD was recommended and approved by the Board of County Commissioners. Copies of the plan's goals were distributed to members. Kassie Lewis reported that nearly all goals have been completed, some goals are ongoing, and others, the DBD is going above the recommendations. Under the "Marketing Initiatives" goals, she stated branding has been completed and funds have been set aside to redevelop the DBD's website. Sarah Sprecher clarified that funding has been requested for the discovery phase and overhaul of the DBD's, Airport, and the overall County websites based on approval by the County Commissioners in May 2017. Julie Rohm noted Dan Spedden and Betsey Devore of the Convention and Visitors Bureau may be a resource to the County as they recently revised its website. Ms. Lewis mentioned "Business Attraction" efforts undertaken over the past several years include targeted direct mail campaigns utilizing Hoovers Database, business-to-business letters, personalized local products sent to various manufacturers, and partnerships with municipalities and joint incentive packages were developed. Hugh Breslin suggested the DBD continue to work with Jim Herbert and the City of Hagerstown to target high technology users for the Gigabit City. Jill Frick reported the City and County public relations teams are in discussions to jointly market the Gigabit City. "Business Retention" has many elements and is very important to the DBD and the State of Maryland. The DBD depends upon resident businesses to attract new businesses, we partner business visits with various municipalities and the State of Maryland, standardized data is collected during visits, and a number of programs are conducted to recognize and express appreciation for businesses located here. The DBD has also initiated several programs such the Manufacturers Roundtable, Logistics Roundtable, LEAN Peer Group, and specialized training opportunities to assist businesses. The DBD recently held a meeting with Harvest, Inc., and every possible available resource to get them up and running. The meeting was held at the DBD with a representative from Harvest, Frostburg State University, USM-H, Theresa Shank of HCC, Linda Spence, Julie Rohm, and Gary Bockrath to discuss research and workforce needs. Ms. Shank noted an additional meeting with Harvest, Inc., representatives will meet at HCC, along with Kassie Lewis and Andrew Sargent on March 30 to learn more about the company's growth plan and potential resources available within the County. Gary Bockrath noted that while degree programs seemed to be the main focus, the company was very much interested in apprenticeship programs. He was able to connect with Kelly Schultz, Secretary for the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations.

Kassie Lewis noted rumors circulating throughout the community that discredits what the county is doing for economic development discredits the EDC and discredits the Department of Business Development (DBD). This is a serious issue; the rumors are hurtful and impede staff performance. Former EDC members are talking to current members and voicing opinions as to what is or is not happening in the DBD. She asked members for assistance in identifying concerns so they can be addressed and resolved before they become an issue. She invited all to communicate concerns to the Commissioners, to herself, to DBD staff, and/or in person at an EDC meeting. As a long term member of the EDC, Janet Stiles Fulton stated it would be beneficial for members to understand how projects are handled and decided, and why projects are not located in Washington County and what we could do differently. She commented on the resignation of Clayton Wilcox from the Washington County Public Schools (WCPS), and questions whether or not existing school officials will continue support for the Technical High School. Kassie Lewis reported she is very much involved with Dr. Peggy Pugh and Cody Pine in visiting businesses. The school system is interested in providing programs that meet business needs and

those that educate students on career options aside from college. Theresa Shank stated we need to impress upon students and parents that learning is a lifelong endeavor. Ms. Lewis noted the DBD works with WCPS to educate guidance counselors and student program directors on career learning opportunities.

Joshua Martin suggested the DBD provide more communication on what's going on regarding economic development matters such as the DBD participated in a letter writing campaign, a telephone campaign, and provide data that includes what industry was targeted, how many responded, what the results were, etc. He mentioned the EDC/DBD must work to make Maryland and Washington County a more business-friendly place to do business. Our narrow county location, tucked between West Virginia and Pennsylvania is problematic in regards to regulations and legislature. Pennsylvania and West Virginia are not as heavily regulated as Maryland. If Volvo weren't already here, they would have never made the decision to locate here given the current legislation, environmental regulations, and now proposed laws regarding paid overtime. Kassie Lewis agreed that all of us need to better communicate with each other and explained that as you peel back the layers of what economic development is all about, you find that it is a multifaceted process bringing a company in and to get a company that is here to help them grow. Gary Bockrath felt it may be helpful for him and others on the commission to learn metrics, how many new businesses have been brought to the area, how many employees, etc., which may help to focus on where they need to go as a Commission. Ms. Lewis noted the DBD recently invested in Salesforce that will help with producing the metrics requested.

Gary Bockrath explained he and the Executive Committee discussed whether or not the EDC was structured properly and as it turns out, we are structured properly for the State of Maryland. Our competition, Berkeley County, WV and Franklin County, PA are both economic development corporations are set up as public/private EDCs where they can buy and sell land. Is there a more effective way for structuring our EDC? Kassie Lewis stated CHIEF operates as a corporation that buys and sells land and is an arm to the DBD. However, before the EDC can obtain that type of authority, you need to identify a funding source. CHIEF is being held back at this time because they can't buy more land. Ms. Shank stated CHIEF is trying to develop the property between the hospital and the college and are waiting for the right tenant, which is a big asset to be holding. Ms. Lewis stated a big prospect had to be turned away because water and sewer are not available to the property. Ed Lough stated water and sewer should have been put in place prior to the road being laid. Yale Drive was sold on the prospect of development of that area.

Jill Frick noted the Strategic Economic Development Plan report provided by Ms. Lewis is fabulous. It is a great tool for staff, City and County, to provide to volunteers for use in spreading the word on what economic development efforts are being made and disband myths in the community. The City has a similar economic development plan, and meets on a quarterly basis with the Mayor and Council to share progress. Kassie Lewis noted a bi-monthly document is forwarded to the Commissioners to keep them abreast of what is happening. Mr. Bockrath stated the EDC, as an Advisory Commission should meet with the Commissioners to present their concerns and recommendations. Julie Rohm stated the Commissioners were able to learn about economic development happenings when they attended EDC meetings regularly.

Future meeting topics include: 1) Jim Herbert's Gigabit City in a separate meeting; 2) Cascade Town Centre presentation – either a separate meeting or in conjunction with a future EDC meeting; 3) Update on Williamsport and how we can assist the C&O Canal Headquarters relocation; 4) Brain storming session on what types of business we need to attract; 5) a meeting with secondary education and Dr. Boyd Michael; 6) CHIEF update and how we can assist with funding; and 7) an update from Phil Ridenour regarding the Hagerstown Regional Airport.

Although we did not have time to complete the overview of the Strategic Economic Development Plan, Ms. Rohm encouraged members to review the document provided and be prepared with questions or comments. A question timeframe will be built into the agenda relating to the Strategic Economic Development Plan. Joshua Martin suggested the DBD prepare a document that could be shared with the EDC that could be used to take away each month that would help to answer questions in the community.

*Executive Committee* – Nothing reported this month.

*City Center Committee* – Nothing reported this month.

*Infrastructure Committee* – Nothing reported this month.

*Marketing and Communications Committee* – Nothing reported this month.

*Old Business* – Nothing reported this month.

*New Business* – Nothing reported this month.

*Adjournment* – *Ed Lough* made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by *Michael Reyka*.  
*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