



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

March 12, 2025

Commission Members Present: Charlie Athey, Paula Reeder, Judy Crow, and Dick Story.

Commission Members Absent: Judy Gifford, David Bowman, and Sandy Scott.

Also in Attendance: Jamie Williams, Director, Katie Abbott, Economic Development Manager, Shalyn Boulden, Tourism Manager, and Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, Economic and Tourism Development.

At 3:00 p.m. Mr. Athey called the meeting to order. Mr. Athey requested a motion to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2025, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Story, seconded by Ms. Reeder, the minutes of February 26, 2025, meeting were unanimously approved.

Ms. Cindy Genther, Real Estate Agent and Broker, presented a 2024 Real Estate Market Review, noting that demand is still strong, particularly under \$350,000 for newer homes. Ms. Genther shared that increasing inventory may slow price increases and expect mortgage rates to be reduced slowly. She noted that construction costs are still higher than existing homes and that there are fewer short-term rentals and investor buyers. In general, 32% of buyers pay cash, 48% utilize conventional financing and 20% utilize FHA/VA loans. The demand for rentals exceeds the supply.

The department is currently working on the 2024 Strategic Plan Scorecard update to be presented at the April meeting. Spring tourism advertisements made possible through the Economic Development Administration grant through the Maryland Office of Tourism, are complete and will broadcast on the three major television networks during the morning and evening news hours and will stream on iHeart Radio. Ms. Abbott has developed a web page for the Maryland 250 initiative for Kent County. The County is partnering with other organizations within the Towns and County to promote a 250 context within the events already scheduled. Thirteen Micro Ag grant applications were received with a total grant request of over \$95,000. The County has \$54,000 to award and the grant review committee will be picking up packets to begin scoring. The Museums of Kent's Driving Tour Passport has gone to the printer and will be ready in time for the Washington College Academy of Lifelong Learning class starting later this month. Kent County will be hosting the Maryland Destination Marketing Organization in June at Crow Vineyard.

Ms. Williams shared there were lots of items in the priorities submitted by Commission members related to Business Attraction and lots of discussions via email, individual meetings, etc. We thought it would be beneficial to reiterate the County's efforts regarding business attraction.

- The new website will roll out in the new fiscal year, 90% of site selectors go online for site research and community information.

- ReSimplfi is being implemented to list commercial properties available for sale or lease in Kent County. The software eliminates staff from manually researching and updating the listings, enhancing accuracy and timeliness.
- Kent County is working with MEDCO and their Maryland Business Ready Sites Program to determine if it is a fit to assist in developing the assets needed - properly zoned land with utilities to attract businesses.
- The Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund budgeted \$245,000 for Regional Business Attraction/Expansion Marketing project, the Request for Proposal was drafted and was shared.
- Kent County maintains a presence in business attraction publications recognized by the International Economic Development Council and a few regional publications, leveraging editorial content, digital assets, and social media outreach.

Ms. Williams shared the top themes for business attractions, 1) Real Estate, Sites and Buildings 2) Utilities and Infrastructure and 3) Workforce and Maryland's business attraction challenges.

Mr. Divillio shared the annual awards for Teacher of the Year, Support Staff of the Year, and Promising Educator of the Year Awards will be coming up. Local nominations will be held later in March and winners will be announced in April with a recognition ceremony on April 16, 2025. Mr. Divilio shared that the Kent County Middle School project is moving forward, and they are currently in the design phase and are engaged with the General Assembly on a bill that would increase that State share of construction costs.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Crow seconded by Mr. Story, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:14 p.m. The Commission will reconvene on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director