



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

February 11, 2026

Commission Members Present: David Bowman, Creigh Rahenkamp, Judy Crow, Benjamin Tilghman and Joanne Rich.

Commission Members Absent: Bob Jacob and Cathy Bramble.

Also in Attendance: Jamie Williams, Director, and Katie Abbott, Economic Development Manager, Economic and Tourism Development.

At 3:02 p.m., Ms. Rich called the meeting to order.

Ms. Rich requested a motion to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2025, and January 14, 2026, meetings. On a motion by Ms. Crow, seconded by Mr. Bowman, the minutes of December 10, 2025, and January 14, 2026, meetings were unanimously approved.

Tourism Subcommittee: Ms. Crow shared that the subcommittee held a virtual meeting. The committee wants to organize a spring gathering and has discussed potential speakers. Shayln requested feedback from the previous event. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026, at 10 a.m., and it will be virtual.

Nominating Subcommittee: Mr. Bowman welcomed Ben Tilghman. Mr. Tilghman moved to Chestertown 8 years ago, with a lifelong connection to the Eastern Shore through a family farm near Centreville. He is a professor of Art at Washington College. He is looking forward to providing a connection between Washington College and the County. Ms. Rich introduced Mr. Tilghman to the other Commission members.

Housing Subcommittee: Ms. Williams shared that the Request for Proposal (RFP) has been drafted for the Housing Inventory/Assessment Study. The County received a grant to complete the study, with financial support from the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC), and the County expects to release an RFP in the coming months.

Carla Gerber, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning, presented information previously requested regarding the rezoning of parcels through the update of zoning regulations in the new Unified Development Ordinance and changes to permitted densities and lot sizes that pertain mainly to the Village district and Intense Village districts, as well as the new Mixed Use Development District.

Notable upzoning during the development of the Unified Development Ordinance. Several properties went from a less-dense agricultural type to a more-dense residential development zoning.

- Agricultural Zoning District to Community Residential - Kevin Kimble near Chestertown
- Resource Character to Community Residential - Billy Norris

- Agricultural Zoning District to Community Residential - Walters Family near Galena
- Millington Growth Area – Mixed Use Development District
- Agricultural Zoning District to Employment Center – Michael Vargo
- Crossroads Commercial District was combined with the Commercial District
- Industrial District was combined with the Employment Center District
- Rural Residential District was combined with the Community Residential District

Comparing 2002 and 2025 zoning designations, about 2,300 acres shifted from Rural Residential (1 unit/3 acres) to Community Residential (1 unit/acre).

There are approximately 20-30 building permits for new dwellings per year in the unincorporated areas of the County.

In the previous Land Use Ordinance, the density in the Village district was 4 units per acre with a minimum lot size of 9,500 square feet. In the new Unified Development Ordinance, the density is 5 units per acre, with a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet for single-family dwelling developments. Two-family dwellings require a minimum of 4,000 square feet per side, and townhouses require a minimum of 2,000 square feet per unit. Village and Intense Village zoning both allow single-family, two-family, townhouses, and multi-family units. The Unified Development Ordinance has bulk standards for both types of development, single-family standards and two-family, townhouse, and multi-family standards. Intense Village is only located on the edge of Chestertown.

The Community Residential district may be developed on private wells and septic, and most of the Community Residential district is not served by public water or sewer. As for subdividing lots, any zoning district may be subdivided by a single lot or a full-scale development. We review any subdivision against the bulk standards, design standards, and subdivision requirements. The unincorporated areas haven't experienced much subdivision activity over the last 5-10 years, and most new lots have been single lots subdivided from larger parcels.

Critical Area was enacted in the mid-1980s and includes all land located within 1,000 feet of the mean high-water line. There are three land use designations: Intense Development Areas (IDA), Limited Development Areas (LDA), and Resource Conservation Areas (RCA). Growth Allocation is the means to change land from a less intense designation/use to a more intense designation/use, which allows for more development. Growth allocations were granted to the Towns when the law was originally adopted, and the County can use the remaining acres of growth allocation for desired projects if they meet the standards of the State and Local policies. In the recent comprehensive zoning update, 60 acres of growth allocation were granted for the Millington 301 corridor development to change the Critical Area lands from an RCA to an IDA. RCA density is 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres, which is the State law. Our local zoning is not more restrictive.

Ms. Rich asked how many housing units were short in Kent County. Ms. Rich asked about upgrades to Rock Hall's water and wastewater systems and how that would impact potential development. Ms. Gerber was unfamiliar with the goals of the upgrades in the Town of Rock Hall. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) are allowed for employee housing in certain districts, and any proposals should be brought to the County for review. Mr. Rahenkamp asked about denied access lines. Ms. Gerber explained that the

regulations are intended to concentrate development in designated areas and prevent sprawl, with exceptions permitted only in the event of a public health emergency.

The County offers an online mapping tool that allows users to explore zoning, water, and sewer service areas, and other available map layers. Commission members discussed the need to develop and refine messaging to promote the changes and encourage housing development.

Ms. Williams shared the following staff report.

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** A project through the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund is underway to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties, spearheaded by consultant Jenn Cooper through the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC). Approval of a CEDS by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to become an Economic Development District (EDD) would qualify the region for additional federal funding.
- **Career and Technology Liaison:** Another regional project through the USRC. Nancy LaJoice, Consultant, is working with Kent County Public Schools to connect with businesses for internships, apprenticeships, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- **Digital Scholarship Museums Partnership (DSMP):** The Department partnered with Washington College, Kent County Public Schools (KCPS), and Museums of Kent to share a pop-up museum program about local history that featured 5 of the 8 County museums and was presented to all 8th graders at Kent County Middle School on February 6, 2026.
- **Post Secondary Success Fair Planning -** The department, along with USRC, is assisting in planning the event (like a job fair) hosted by Kent County High School CTE program, Maryland Business Roundtable - Next Generations Scholars, scheduled for March 6, 2026. Businesses, non-profits, and colleges, etc. are invited to participate. The deadline for vendors to sign up is February 20, 2026.
- **The Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow:** The department is taking the lead, along with the USRC, in partnership with Washington College, Cecil, and Queen Anne's Counties, for the third year in a row. The Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow Pitch Competition returns on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. This free, public event celebrates entrepreneurship across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties, bringing together startups, students, and business leaders to pitch ideas, compete for cash prizes, receive expert feedback, and connect with regional business resource partners. Interested applicants can apply now, and more information can be found at www.kentcounty.com/strtlup.
- **Enterprise Zone Designation:** The Maryland Department of Commerce shared the data for the Chestertown EZ eligibility. They are eligible. Katie will update the 2016 application, with a deadline of April 15, 2026. The process requires a joint public hearing with the Town. Eligibility was determined by the poverty rate for Census Tract 9502, which is 13.6% in 2026. For comparison, the rate was 20.3% in 2016, dropped to 5.1% in 2021, and slightly increased to 5.9% in 2022. These fluctuations highlight the inconsistencies often found in Census data.

- Kent MD 250 – Citizen’s Academy Spring Cohort kicks off on Thursday, 17 people registered.

At the March meeting, Cindy Genther, Real Estate Agent and Broker, will share the 2025 Real Estate Review. The Commission agreed to invite the USRC to the April meeting. Future requests were the Town Manager of Millington, the new Town Managers of Chestertown and Rock Hall, and the Main Street Chestertown's new Executive Director.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Mr. Rahenkamp, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:26 p.m. The Commission will meet again on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners’ Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director