



## Economic & Tourism Development Commission

**March 11, 2026**

**Commission Members Present:** Creigh Rahenkamp, Judy Crow, Joanne Rich, Bob Jacob, and Cathy Bramble.

**Commission Members Absent:** Benjamin Tilghman and David Bowman.

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

At 3:00 p.m., Ms. Rich called the meeting to order.

Ms. Rich requested a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2026, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Rahenkamp, seconded by Mr. Jacob, the minutes of the February 11, 2026, meeting was unanimously approved.

Ms. Rich acknowledged the Kent County Chamber of Commerce's Excellence Award for Person of the Year that Jim Rich was awarded. She noted that they were surprised and honored.

**Housing Subcommittee:** The Housing Subcommittee discussed the need for more consistent meetings, as emphasized by Mr. Jacob. Mr. Rahenkamp highlighted recent progress in securing speakers to address housing development questions during ETDC meetings. After reviewing the information gathered from these discussions, Ms. Rich suggested that the subcommittee may want to revisit and refine its goals moving forward.

**Tourism Subcommittee:** Ms. Crow shared that the subcommittee held a virtual meeting and would like to host another Tourism Business Summit in the Fall. The next meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2016, at 11 a.m. She stressed the need to disseminate information to tourism-related businesses such as short-term rentals, to encourage trip planning for their patrons with all that Kent County has to offer. Ms. Abbott advised that she could export a list from the business directory to share. Ms. Rich shared about a post that was done on her Inn at Huntingfield Creek Facebook page called Rock Hall – Maxxing. It is a visual of various photos of what Rock Hall has to offer. She shared that this concept could be used to promote the County.

**Nominating Subcommittee:** Ms. Williams shared that David Bowman and Bob Jacob's terms expire in May. They are eligible for reappointment. The subcommittee is scheduled to meet on April 1, 2026, and the recommendation will be brought to the ETDC at the April 8, 2026, meeting for a vote. The approved recommendation will then go before the County Commissioners to be considered for reappointment.

Cindy Genther, Real Estate Agent and Broker, shared her annual 2025 Kent County Real Estate Market Review. She noted:

- 35% of buyers were non-primary residents
- 21% were non-Maryland residents
- 13% were from Pennsylvania, and 5% from Delaware, and a decline from DC.
- The need for affordable and non-government subsidized housing.
- Short-Term Rentals are down
- There were no perc tests done by the Health Department in 2025 in Kent County
- Permitting processes could be done more efficiently
- Millington WWTP expansion needs to progress quickly
- Chesapeake Landing has many lots to be developed
- Rock Hall has 55 acres parcel – 70-90 units – developers are interested, but need a buyer for the property
- A Rock Hall specific Real Estate report will be presented to the Rock Hall Economic Development Committee meeting on March 24, 2026, at 6:15 p.m. at St. John's Church

Ms. Williams shared the following staff report:

- The Ag Grant application period has closed, and 10 applications were received.
- Budget request has been submitted. It includes an additional \$20,000 for tourism marketing due to rising costs and a \$30,000 request for a consultant to assist with the 2027 ETD Strategic Plan Update. Mr. Rahenkamp made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bramble, and passed unanimously to write a letter of support from the ETDC for the additional funding request for the 2027 ETD Strategic Plan Update consultant. Mr. Rahenkamp will work with Ms. Osborn to draft the letter.
- The Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow Pitch Competition returns on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. Commission Members were encouraged to attend. Applications to pitch have closed, and 13 applications were received. Information can be found at [www.kentcounty.com/strt1up](http://www.kentcounty.com/strt1up).
- Maryland Day, March 25, 2026 - Dress in your Maryland apparel and send photos to [www.kent250.com](http://www.kent250.com) to win prizes.
- 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 ends on Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> with a small reception before attending the County Commissioners Meeting for a question-and-answer session along with presentation of certificates for participation in the cohort.

Ms. Crow made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bramble, and passed unanimously to send a letter of support for Main Street Rock Hall's Technical Assistance Grant application.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Williams was provided with instructions on future speakers for the regional projects in progress in partnership with the Upper Shore Regional Council. The Commission also requested staff to reach out to Kent County Public Schools. Topics include financial literacy curriculum, opportunities for students, communication skills, and best practices on how to apply for a job. It was

mentioned that Truist, Junior Achievement, and Maryland Business Roundtable programs include some of these topics. However, we are unsure if these organizations reach all students. Additional requests for future speakers were the Town Manager of Millington, the new Town Manager of Rock Hall, and Main Street Chestertown's new Executive Director.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Rahenkamp, seconded by Ms. Bramble, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:29 p.m. The Commission will meet again on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD  
Director