



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

May 13, 2026

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

Commission Members Absent: Cathy Bramble

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., Ms. Rich called the meeting to order.

Ms. Rich requested a motion to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2026, meeting. On a motion by Ms. Crow, seconded by Mr. Tilghman, the minutes of the April 8, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved.

Ms. Rich introduced the new Commission member, Ben Legow, and provided Mr. Legow an opportunity to share a little about himself.

Ms. Crow shared that the tourism subcommittee met and is working on a Facebook group where tourism-related businesses can communicate and share information to enhance visitors' experiences throughout Kent County. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 2:30 pm via Teams to review the Facebook group.

Ms. Williams reported that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the County Housing Study was released on May 5, 2026. The deadline to submit the proposals is June 8, 2026. Ms. Williams also shared State housing legislative initiatives. The Maryland Transit and Housing Opportunity Act (SB 389/HB 894) aims to accelerate dense, mixed-use development within 0.5 miles of high-frequency rail stations, of which there are none in Kent County. The Maryland Housing Certainty Act of 2026 is a key legislative initiative signed into law to accelerate housing development and improve affordability by reducing regulatory delays and locking in project rules. It addresses the state's housing shortage by ensuring approved projects are not stalled by changing regulations.

Nancy LaJoice, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC), gave an overview of the CTE Liaison Project and the STRTIUP Recap. Ms. LaJoice shared that she works with the Kent County High School and the business community to connect opportunities for apprenticeships and internships. Ms. LaJoice shared that the USRC submitted a grant application to the Maryland Department of Labor for a 3-year Upper Shore Bright Futures Accelerator Program grant, focused on Healthcare and Social Services workforce development/apprenticeships within the USRC footprint of Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties. She shared opportunities for members of the business community to participate in programs such as mock interviews and resume reviews with the Maryland Business Roundtable Next Generation

Scholars program at Kent County High School. Ms. Crow thanked the USRC for vineyard efforts and requested additional ways farms could diversify. Ms. LaJoice suggested a gathering where farmers could share success stories with peers, focused on Agri-Tourism.

Ms. Williams shared that staff is working on the Small Business Community Impact Reimbursement Grant that will be presented to the County Commissioners on June 2, 2026, for input. Ms. Williams shared that through COVID and beyond, many businesses did not qualify for grants for varying reasons. Businesses that are targeted must be for-profit, community needs-based, such as healthcare, transportation, and childcare. This program aligns with the work that the Local Management Board has been focusing on with community needs. This grant will be funded through a \$15,000 fund that the County Commissioners set aside with the USRC a few years ago, in addition to an application to the USRC to redirect \$10,000 from the Rural Maryland RIMPIF fund, and a request to the Commissioners to redirect funds from the Micro Ag grant program that was not spent in FY2023.

Ms. Williams shared that staff are drafting the RFP for the consultant to work with staff, commission members, and stakeholders on the 2027 Economic and Tourism Development Strategic Plan, updating the 2025 Plan, and anticipating the approval of the budget request by the County Commissioners.

Ms. Williams asked if there were any questions about the data shared at the April meeting or the data and reports that were requested and shared after the meeting. There were no questions.

Ms. Boulden shared that the Visitor's Guide has been redesigned as a tri-fold brochure with QR codes that will redirect to the various areas of the County website. She also shared that the brochure will be paired with a rack card listing the annual events. The redesign is a more economical choice because it is smaller, and the QR codes allow for information to be maintained and updated more efficiently on the website. The new guides will be available next week and will be distributed throughout the county before the Memorial Day weekend.

Ms. Williams shared the impact of tourism, noting that last week was National Travel and Tourism Week and that the County Commissioners issued a proclamation. The data shared was from the 2024 Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland annual study. Commission members asked about 2nd homes and how Kent County compares to other counties. Ms. Williams shared that 2nd homes are part of the Economic Impact of Tourism, which is completed annually, shared with Commission members, and located on the County website under Key Industries, Tourism. The individual County data for the other counties in the State will be shared with the Commission members.

A motion was made by Mr. Tilghman, seconded by Mr. Rahenkamp, and passed unanimously to nominate David Bowman as Vice Chair. A subsequent motion by Ms. Crow, seconded by Mr. Tilghman, to elect Mr. Bowman as Vice Chair also passed unanimously.

Susan O'Neil, Executive Director, and Jenn Cooper, Consultant, USRC, will be at the June 10, 2026, meeting to discuss the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the USRC Business Mentoring Program.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Rahenkamp, seconded by Ms. Crow, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:58 p.m. The Commission will meet again on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director