



Economic & Tourism Development Commission

June 10, 2026

Commission Members Present: Creigh Rahenkamp, Cathy Bramble, Joanne Rich, Benjamin Tilghman, Ben Legow, and David Bowman

Commission Members Absent: Judy Crow

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 May 13, 2026, meeting. On a motion by Mr. Tilghman, seconded by Mr. Bowman, the minutes of the May 13, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved.

Ms. Boulden shared that the tourism subcommittee worked with her and Ms. Williams to create a Tourism Subcommittee Facebook group, “Kent County, MD Tourism Community,” which is a private group for businesses and organizations in Kent County to share information. The page is now live. Ms. Rich and Ms. Crow will serve as administrators for six months and will transfer to other members of the tourism subcommittee. Ms. Rich added that the hope is to stimulate conversation in the business community and invited ETDC members to join the group.

Susan O’Neil, Executive Director, and Jenn Cooper, Consultant, Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC), gave an overview of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and USRC Business Mentoring Program. Ms. O’Neil shared the 2023-2025 Impact Report.

Ms. Cooper shared that when SCORE changed its volunteer criteria, there were mentors in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne’s Counties who still wanted to continue to provide mentoring services locally. The USRC set up the Business Mentoring Program. Mentors meet with Mentees as frequently as they need. There are 28 businesses in the Business Mentoring Program in the tri-county area, 7 in Kent County. Ms. Cooper shared that this year at the STRTIUP pitch competition, pitchers met with mentors before the competition. Quarterly meetings/events will be scheduled for mentors and mentees to network with economic development organizations and other small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Ms. O’Neil shared that a CEDS is required by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to provide a roadmap for regional economic growth, resilience and competitiveness and is a prerequisite for an Economic Development District (EDD). It is developed through collaboration among public, private, nonprofit, and educational partners. An EDD is a multi-jurisdictional region designated by the EDA that serves as a regional planning organization, leads development and implementation of the CEDS, and coordinates economic development activities across local governments. An EDD designation can unlock federal funding opportunities. An EDD designation requires a CEDS, which establishes a shared regional vision. It prioritizes projects and investments and supports economic resilience and long-term

prosperity. The CEDS Steering Committee will be composed of individuals across the tri-county area representing government, economic development, agriculture, workforce training, large and small businesses, education, and community partners. Ms. Williams shared that the Steering Committee for Kent County is Aaron Bramble, Tolchester Marina; Cindy Genter, Rock Hall Properties & The Flynn Company; Joanne McNamara, JD, Kent County Director of Grants and Contracts; and Rob Thompson, Sr. Vice President & Loan Officer at Chesapeake Bank & Trust.

Joanne McNamara, Director of Grants and Contracts, shared that she supports all County Departments in finding additional funding sources, Federal, State, or other funds. She assists with grant management and compliance. She also manages funds where Kent County is the grantor, such as the Community Repair and Reinvestment Fund, established through the State of Maryland's legalization of cannabis, and the Opioid Restitution Fund. Her department is responsible for overseeing all County procurement and contracting. Ms. Williams shared that Ms. McNamara's goal of having a database of grants that the County has been awarded and a database of contracts will allow the County to see the total amount of funding brought into the County and monitor contracts that span several years. Ms. McNamara has a Contracts Specialist in her department who will support the County with purchasing and contracting. Ms. McNamara shared that her primary role is to support the county. Opportunities exist where collaboration with the towns creates meaningful benefits, especially on projects supported through County funding.

Ms. Williams shared the Small Business Community Impact Reimbursement Grant Program will launch June 15th. Details can be found online at www.kentcounty.com/grants. \$32,000 is available and individual awards will be between \$1,000 and \$5,000. The Commissioners approved the FY2027 Budget on Tuesday. We are closing out FY2026 and preparing for FY2027. Shalyn and Katie are working on their marketing plans, meeting with vendors, getting proposals, securing insertion orders, etc. Ms. Osborn's position has been reclassified from Administrative Specialist to Engagement Specialist, which better reflects the work she has been doing all along for the Department and the County. The \$30,000 for the 2027 ETD Strategic Plan made it through the budget process. The RFP is almost complete and will be shared with the Commission members on Monday.

Ms. Boulden shared the new visitor's guide and event rack card.

At the request of Ms. Williams, the ETDC members agreed to move the August meeting from the 12, 2026, to the 19, 2026, due to the MACo Summer Conference.

Dr. Chad Rooney, Town Manager, Town of Chestertown, will be our guest at the July 8, 2026, meeting for introductions and to discuss Town initiatives.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Mr. Rahenkamp, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:23 p.m. The Commission will meet again on Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie L. Williams, CEcD
Director