



# Accomack-Northampton Economic Development Committee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, June 10, 2020 3:00 PM  
Virtual Zoom Meeting

## **Members Present**

Iravon Ashby-Hope, Accomack EDA  
Robie Marsh, ESVA Chamber of Commerce  
Joseph Betit, Entrepreneur  
Dr. Mark Reiter, Virginia Tech  
Sara Baldwin, Entrepreneur  
Andy Mason, Mason-Davis Realtors  
Ava Gabrielle-Wise, New Road Community  
Dev.  
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep  
Elizabeth Lankford, Blue Crab Bay Co.  
Dr. Richard Snyder, VIMS  
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of  
Commerce  
Dr. Patrick Tompkins, ESCC  
Charles Kolakowski, Northampton County  
Elaine Meil, A-NPDC  
Terry Malarkey, Shore U

## **Members Absent**

Hon. Lynwood Lewis, VA General  
Assembly  
Hon. Rob Bloxom, VA General Assembly  
Mike Mason, Accomack County  
Michael Hitch, NASA  
Peter J. Bale, Wallops Island Regional  
Alliance

Ron Matthews, Matthews & Co., CPAs  
Phillip Hickman, Dublin Farms  
Jacqueline Chatmon, Citizen  
Philip Smith, NASA

## **Others present**

Shannon Alexander, A-NPDC  
Clara Vaughn, A-NPDC  
Caroline Bott, Office of Elaine Luria  
Bill Payne, Citizen  
Kerry Kobe, theGIG  
Norman Colpitts, Accomack Resident  
Rich Morrison, Accomack County  
Pat Coady, Citizen  
Kim Moore, Inn at Onancock  
Kristine Marcy, Eastern Shore of Virginia  
Foundation  
Kenneth Brown,  
American Indigenous Accawmacke Indians  
Dean Brown,  
American Indigenous Accawmacke Indians  
Lisa Cypress,  
American Indigenous Accawmacke Indians

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Marsh called the Economic Development Committee meeting to order at 3:09 PM.
2. **Public Participation** – Marsh provided members of the public the opportunity to comment. None offered to comment.
3. **December Draft Meeting Minutes** – The draft meeting minutes of the December 11, 2019 meeting were presented.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Snyder, seconded by Mason. The motion carried unanimously, with one abstention from Tompkins, who was not present at the meeting.

#### 4. **Organizational Business**

- I. **Member Nominations** – A motion to approve membership names as listed, including Patrick Tompkins, Michael Hitch, Richard Snyder, Peter Bale, Evelyn Shotwell, Iravon Ashby, and Terrance Malarkey, was made by Belknap, seconded by Mason, and carried unanimously.
- II. **Officer Election** – Alexander noted that Officers’ terms last two years and both Chairman Marsh and Vice Chair Baldwin’s terms are due to expire. A motion was made to appointed Marsh and Baldwin to serve another term in their respective positions as Chair and Vice Chair was made by Belknap, seconded by Mason. No discussion followed and the motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Attendance Record** – The Attendance Record for Fiscal Year 2020 was presented.

#### 5. **Staff Update**

- I. **Emerging Funding Opportunities Discussion & Economic Resilience Items** – Alexander briefed the committee on incoming funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. She noted that this funding will provide a new position at the A-NPDC focusing on economic resiliency and additional economic recovery services. Alexander noted that for the latter, an RFP has been published and invited interested parties to apply. Funding will also provide for a significant update of the current *Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan*.

Morrison updated the Committee that Accomack County received roughly \$2.5 million in CARES Act funding, approximately \$800,000 of will must go to the Towns. He requested members to share news of grants available for local waterman with interested parties in the community, as it has a forthcoming deadline. He invited small businesses that closed due to COVID-19 to visit

<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/building-planning-economic-development/cares-act-grant-information> for forthcoming grant funding available.

Kolakowski noted that Northampton County received just over \$1 million, \$300,000 of which will go to Northampton County Towns. Of the remaining \$700,000, the Northampton County Board of Supervisors is dedicating a portion to businesses impacted by COVID-19. More information regarding how these funds will be allocated is forthcoming.

Alexander highlighted that all objectives for which Recovery funding will be sought from the U.S. EDA must be included in the *Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan*. Tompkins inquired as to whether a need may be added during the December 2020 Economic Development Committee meeting for needs that cannot be anticipated currently. Alexander stated that the Plan may be amended during the December 2020 meeting, but reduced-match funding opportunities may not be available at that time.

**II. Efforts in Securing Supporting Data** – Alexander presented results from the ESVA Businesses’ COVID Response Survey and Eastern Shore Internet survey. She noted data from these surveys will provide needs justification for applications for COVID-19 Recovery funding. Survey are available through the A-NPDC’s Facebook page, and results available by contacting her via email at [salexander@a-npdc.org](mailto:salexander@a-npdc.org). She indicated the importance of Economic Impact Studies (bike trial, etc.) to guide prioritization in the Plan and indicated that this need was included in the amendments to the Action Plans.

**III. New Workforce Recovery Subcommittee** – Alexander requested Committee members interested in serving on the new Workforce Recovery Subcommittee state their interest during the meeting or via email to her or Chairman Marsh over the next two weeks. The intent is to hold two meetings over the next month. Committee Member Betit expressed his interest. Chairman Marsh confirmed he will be on the Sub-committee. No additional Committee members volunteered their interest.

Alexander noted the spring Workforce Summit scheduled for May 1 was not held due to COVID-19. Tompkins noted the organizing partners disappointment the summit could not proceed, and that COVID-19 has changed the business milieu of the Eastern Shore through eliminating some businesses and contributing to the opening of others.

**6. Regional Economic Development Plan** – Alexander reviewed a summary of significant changes to the Economic Development Committee’s four Subcommittee Plans. She reviewed the electronic versions of the Plans and the process for adding comments or updates to the Plans.

- I. Changes as recommended during the fall 2019 Subcommittee meetings were made and have been accessible electronically to members since March for review.
- II. Throughout all four sector plans, names of primary contacts were updated to reflect the current employees serving in these positions. Elizabeth Russell was changed to Laura Dodson; Curtis Smith was changed to Shannon Alexander; Shannon Alexander was changed to Jessica Steelman; and Thomas Johnson was changed to Patrick Tompkins.
- III. Throughout all four sector plans, dates were pushed back by six months to one year due COVID-19-related delays.
- IV. **Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation and Visitor Industries Regional Action Plan:**

1. Goal 1, Objective C: “Establish and promote new water trails” was changed to “Establish and promote new and existing trails (such as, but not limited to: bike, hike, walk, water/paddle, agribusiness, oyster, etc).” Belknap noted that the ACV Artisan Trail is now defunct and any references to it in the Plan should be removed from the Plan. Alexander agreed to removal all specific references to the ACV Artisan Trail.
2. Parking Lot: Alexander noted that all Subcommittee Plans contain many Parking Lot items, including some duplicate goals. She expressed that cleaning up these Parking Lots provides the opportunity to move Strategic Goals into the Plans so they are included in the *Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan*. She noted three emerging Parking Lot items specifically:
  - Wachapreague Hotel Feasibility Study - pending award of USDA RBDG in summer 2020.
  - Pursuit of Rail-to-Trail construction in prioritized segments - pending completion of VDOT study in winter 2020 and with support from the appropriate jurisdiction.
  - Promote Agritourism on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

Chair Marsh spoke in favor of moving the Rails-to-Trails Goal to the full Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation and Visitor Industries Economic Development Subcommittee Plan. Mason concurred with the Rail-to-Trail study’s inclusion. Morrison commented the Accomack County Board of Supervisors is not updated on the Rail-to-Trail Feasibility Study and he does not have the authority to speak on behalf of the Board on the matter. Meil recommended altering the language to specify, “Rail to Trail implementation with support from the appropriate jurisdiction.” Marsh and Tompkins stated their support for this change in language, which was made. Gabrielle-Wise requested information on which entity would lead development, which Alexander specified is listed as the A-NPDC with a

large group of partners. Snyder noted the Wachapreague Hotel Study should be part of the Plan and removed later if pending funding is not awarded.

The first two Parking Lot items were moved to the Action Plan. The third Agritourism goal was saved to the Parking Lot to revisit in the future.

**V. Aerospace and Defense Regional Action Plan:**

**1. Goal 1, Objective F:** Two action items were added to the plan:

- “Improve fiber and create redundant fiber infrastructure to support growing and emerging needs of the Wallops Complex
- “Ensure adequate transportation infrastructure access to Wallops Complex.”

Morrison noted that “create redundant” could be changed to “extend redundancy.” The language was updated to reflect this.

**VI. Agribusiness and Food Processing Action Plan:**

Alexander noted several significant changes to this plan as the result of the completion of the 2019 *Feasibility Study for a Regional Marketplace, Food Hub, and Cooperative Opportunities for Eastern Shore of Virginia Made and Grown Products*:

1. Goal 1, Objective A: “Assess the regional production capacity (small farmer focus)” was removed as it was accomplished through the 2019 Feasibility Study.
2. New Goal 1, Objective A: “Create an identifiable, open Eastern Shore brand to market locally produced agriculture, aquaculture and hand-made and value-added goods. Over time, explore development of the open brand into a vetted, quality-driven label,” was added as a result of Feasibility Study recommendations.
3. Goal 1, Objective B: “Assess the market potential outside of the region for specific farm and farmer’s markets throughout the Eastern Shore. *Very few formal arrangements exist for off-Shore food movement,*” was removed as it was accomplished through the 2019 Feasibility Study.
4. New Goal 1, Objective B: “Launch a fresh-food and value-added partnership to aggregate and distribute locally produced, harvest, and made goods,” was added as a result of Feasibility Study recommendations.
5. Goal 1, Objective C: “Evaluate Feasibility of bringing Mobile Meat Processing Unit to the Eastern Shore on a semi-annual/quarterly basis,”

was added as a strategy resulting from Feasibility Study recommendations.

6. Goal 2, Objective B: “Identify key sites for current and future economic development and transportation infrastructure needs required for access an sustainable growth,” was added as a Strategy.

**VII. Foundational and Entrepreneurship Action Plan:**

1. Goal 3: “Increase market and value-add opportunities for Eastern Shore products and providers,” was revisited, as all Objectives under this goal concerned development of a regional center, which was found unfeasible in the short- and mid-term by the 2019 Feasibility Study cited previously.

Coady noted a the study may lack nuance, as a marketplace must be scaled properly as a project too small will not attract enough visitors and a project too large will not be economically viable. Belknap noted a central agricultural organizational framework is needed to support a marketplace, and artisans must be able to scale to production to support a marketplace. The following strategies were added as a result of Committee conversations:

2. Goal 3, Objective A: new strategy to “Reevaluate Business Case for Market & Convention Center,” was adopted by the Committee, with and extended date to accommodate the longer-term nature of the goal.
3. Goal 3, Objective A: A new strategy to “Develop the appropriate supply chain for this level of production necessary to support a regional center/market,” was adopted by the Committee, with and extended date to accommodate the longer-term nature of the goal.
4. Goal 3, Objective A: A new strategy to “Obtain funding for initial construction,” was adopted by the Committee, with and extended date to accommodate the longer-term nature of the goal.
5. Betit provided a Subcommittee report, which included additional updates for the Foundational and Entrepreneurship Action Plan, including the launch of the GIG in Exmore, and an approved GO Virginia grant for the Eastern Shore of Virginia Hydro-drone Near-shore Shallow-water Bathymetric Survey Program. He noted one goal of Go Virginia projects is to attract new companies to the region, which is already being observed in the first month of implementation. Alexander verified that no additional changes to the Strategies of the Foundational and Entrepreneurship Action Plan needed to be included in the update.

- VIII. Malarkey noted the rough cost estimate of \$20,000 to develop a business plan for Eastern Shore University and requested Committee members’ feedback on appropriate funding sources to complete such a plan. Tompkins noted the Dragas Center at Old Dominion University has graduate students that may be interested

in such a project. He offered to connect the two.

- IX.** A motion to approve the updates presented, with changes noted above, was made by Baldwin, seconded by Mason. No discussions followed and the motion passed unanimously.
  
- 7. Next Meeting** – The next Economic Development Committee meeting will be Wednesday, December 9, 2020 from 3-4:30 PM. A potential October meeting will be called, if necessary. Alexander requested Committee members contact her and Chairman Marsh with any additional changes to the Regional Economic Development Plan’s four Action Plans needed following the meeting.
  
- 8. Adjourn** – A motion to adjourn the Economic Development Committee meeting was made by Baldwin, seconded by Mason. The motion carried unanimously and the Meeting adjourned at 4:49 PM.

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