

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission
Economic Development Committee
MEETING MINUTES

August 21, 2013

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission
Accomac, VA

Members present:

Peter J. Bale, Eastern Shore Defense Alliance
Pamela Barefoot, Blue Crab Bay Company
Robert S. Bloxom, Sr.
Laura Belle Gordy, A-NPDC
Elaine Meil (for Charles Kellam), A-NPDC
Tom Riennerth, A-NPDC
Caroline Massey, NASA
Jay Ford (for Ralph Northam),
Virginia General Assembly)
Ava Gabrielle,
New Road Community Development
Wes Edwards (for John LeCato), Accomack
County Economic Development Authority
Robbie Marsh, BB&T
Eddie Swain (for Linda Thomas-Glover),
Eastern Shore Community College
Oral Lambert, Bay Creek Resort & Club
Rich Morrison (for Steve Miner), Accomack
County
Charles McSwain (for Katie Nunez),
Northampton County
Willie Randall, A-NPDC
John Tarr, Town of Chincoteague

Absent:

Irene Davis, Accomack County Economic
Development Authority
John Chandler,
Bayshore Concrete Products Corp.
Tommy Clark, Don's Seafood Restaurant and
Tom's Cove Aquafarms
Dale Cook, Tyson Foods, Inc.
Kevin Dennis, Perdue Farms
Charlie Russell, WESR
Andy Mason, Mason-Davis Realtors
Jeff Middleton, Tyson Foods
Lynwood Lewis, Virginia General Assembly
Genevieve Walker-Switzer, T&W Block

Others present:

Susan Simon, A-NPDC
Art Fisher, Citizen
George Bryan, Small Business Development
Administration

Call to order at 12:03 PM

Board Election of FY 2014 Officers

Board election of FY 2014 Chairman and Vice Chairman was requested. Board member WRandall moved, seconded by WEdwards, to elect Oral Lambert as Chair, and Linda Thomas Glover as Vice Chair. All Board members were in favor.

Minutes Approval

WRandall made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting (Nov 9, 2012) and WEdwards seconded. The Board passed the minutes unanimously without revision.

Introduction of Members

Meeting attendees introduced themselves and their affiliation.

By-Laws Change

Motion to change 30 days notice to call an EDC meeting was made by WEdwards, seconded by CMassey. The Board accepted two (2) weeks prior notice as an amendment.

CEDS Approval and Mid Point Progress Report

The Economic Development Coordinator announced that the CEDES had been approved by both counties as of May 2013. The Mid Point Report to EDA, submitted at the end of June, is to be followed by the Year End Report and due by mid/late December. The Year End Report is to be posted for public notice and comment at least 60 days in advance before submitting the final version.

CEDS Projects and Performance Measures

The Board focused on some key CEDES projects, as well as performance measure mechanisms that were provided to the Board in their emailed information packets. Individual members of the Board highlighted progress on the following specific projects:

Ports Infrastructure Chas McSwain (Northampton County) cited a key meeting on August 13, 2013 that included leaders from VDOT, VPA, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and community members. The meeting focused on the opportunity to return Bay Shore Concrete Products to prior employment levels by adding some 200 jobs. Direct results from the meeting include an immediate start on the access road planning so that large vehicles can avoid sharp turns, and commitments to perform maintenance dredging for the harbor channel. Delegate Lewis also agreed at that meeting to attempt a legislative fix for a new program that funds port infrastructure, but leaves Northampton off the qualified area list. Additional Northampton developments include creation of a mega yacht maintenance facility; development of a multimodal terminal for barge to rail or truck; and added facilities in the Science & Technology Industrial Park related to the expansion of transportation infrastructure.

In order to make the case for deepening the Cape Charles Harbor and channel, Northampton was informed it would need to identify multiple private customers to qualify the project.

Northampton has begun work to validate that effort. One Committee member suggested Orbital Science as a potential customer, and another board member cited a positive report regarding oil and wind energy entities that could possibly serve those interests, thanks to the new access road.

Wallops Research Park (WRP): (Caroline Massey, NASA; Peter Bales, ES Defense Alliance; Deborah Christie, formerly, with Wallops Research Park) The Wallops Research Park (WRP) received approval of \$4 million from the state to build a taxiway, with a \$4 million match from Accomack County. The site should be pad-ready for 2014. WRP's kick-off meeting earlier in the morning included Accomack County, NASA, contractor Timmons, and others.

In addition, and in conformance with a CEDS project, WRP is ready to sign an agreement with several universities, science, and non-profit institutions for an onsite workforce training building that would be tied in with the Eastern Shore Community College. WRP already has people who want to do research at the building.

The Committee was informed that construction of the Navy's "Touch and Go" is due to start in mid-October; and that they could watch the Weather Channel or go to the NASA website to see the Global Hawks monitoring Atlantic hurricanes. On a more "spirited" note, WRP is partnering with Chatham Vineyards, in producing a wine labeled, VA Rocket Fuel Chardonnay.

Discussions

EDC discussed several topics where the committee could advocate, "dig deeper", to push economic and workforce development for the community. With overarching goals to bring new business opportunities and jobs while leveraging off inherent Eastern Shore assets, the discussion addressed:

Expanding Broadband: EDC members cited the need to bring exponential growth, by expanding broadband technology in order to tap into the resource and turn the Eastern Shore into a "Silicon Shore". High speed infrastructure is also important for the Eastern Shore to develop alternative energy.

Testing Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS): The Committee discussed at length the need to support Virginia in its competition with 26 other states to be selected by FAA as a test site for Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) technology, an economic development that could potentially bring as much \$500 million and 3,000 jobs by 2017 to the Eastern Shore/Wallops. Beneficial UAS technological applications for the Eastern Shore include aquaculture, precision agriculture, law enforcement, search and rescue. The Eastern Shore Community College is making investments in getting UAS-ready. Because recently passed legislation in Virginia indicated a not-so friendly posture towards UAS technology that might not fare favorably with the FAA, the Committee resolved to write a letter to the Governor expressing its full support, showing that the local community is indeed UAS-technology friendly, and encouraging the Governor to publicly and aggressively support this technology and the economic development it would bring to Virginia and the Eastern Shore. A motion for PBales to draft the letter was made by CMassey, seconded by RMarsh.

Promoting Industrial Development: The Committee discussed the need to push industrial/economic development, job creation and bring new opportunities and new types of businesses to the area, leveraging off of ES assets. Accomack County is funding a new promotional packet. One member noted witnessing that when Anheuser Busch came to Williamsburg several years ago, many companies soon came after.

Growing the Workforce: The Committee also discussed the need to educate and retain the workforce in emerging technologies, including developing alternative energies (reiterating a dependent need for high speed broadband infrastructure), and the possibility to make the Eastern Shore a regional center for wind energy. The EDC also highlighted the need to add blue collar jobs and to develop a sales pitch that would help keep young students here while getting them primed and ready for new jobs.

Developing New Energy Sources: Committee members discussed the potential for the Eastern Shore to develop new energy sources in oil and wind. However, it was noted that although offshore oil platform structures would create lots of jobs, those same platforms in NASA's range would shut down the potential for commercial space business due to the high insurance costs that would have to be incurred by privately held businesses. A NASA-developed map shows only a tiny wedge where it would be possible and safe to put in assets. One Committee member also noted that research shows jobs attributed to putting in wind mills would mostly be related to electricity.

Natural Gas Pipeline: The Committee discussed the private company from Maryland that currently is exploring the possibility of putting in a natural gas pipeline that would extend initially as far as Nandua High school. The private company is making a presentation to the Accomack County Board of Supervisors later in the evening. Another member encouraged pushing extension of a natural gas pipeline into Northampton County as well.

The motion for the meeting to adjourn at 1:35 was made by WRandall, seconded by ESwain.