

Accomack-Northampton  
**Economic Development Committee**

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

December 11, 2019

3:00 p.m.

Eastern Shore Community College

**Members Present**

Robie Marsh, ESVA Chamber of Commerce  
Joseph Betit, Entrepreneur  
Mark Reiter, Virginia Tech  
Phillip Hickman, Dublin Farms  
Ron Matthews, Matthews & Co., CPAs  
Philip Smith, NASA  
Sara Baldwin, Entrepreneur  
Charles Kolakowski, Northampton County  
Andy Mason, Mason-Davis Realtors  
David Lumgair, Luminary Air Group  
Ava Gabrielle-Wise, New Road Community Dev.  
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep  
Ira Ashby, Accomack County EDA  
Elizabeth Lankford, Blue Crab Bay Co.

**Members Absent**

Elaine Meil, A-NPDC  
Roland Bailey, A-NPDC  
Peter J. Bale, Wallops Island Regional Alliance  
Rob Bloxom, VA General Assembly  
Tommy Clark, Don's Seafood Rest. & Tom's  
Cove Aquafarms  
Arthur Leonard, Town of Chincoteague  
Lynwood Lewis, VA General Assembly  
Mike Mason, Accomack County  
John Pavlik, Northampton County JIDA  
Richard Williams, Being Well Essentials  
Kevin Dennis, Perdue Farms  
Gary Letchworth, NASA  
Wesley Edwards, Accomack County EDA  
Thomas Johnson, ESCC  
Richard Snyder, VIMS  
Jacqueline Chatmon, Citizen  
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of  
Commerce

**Others present**

Shannon Alexander, A-NPDC  
Clara Vaughn, A-NPDC  
Caroline Bott, Office of Elaine Luria  
Bill Parr, Northampton JIDA  
Terry Malarkey, Shore U  
Peggy Ritter, Citizen

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Marsh called the Economic Development Committee meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. Committee members and attendees introduced themselves and their respective organizations.

### **Public Participation**

Marsh provided members of the public the opportunity to comment. None offered to comment.

### **Organizational Business**

#### ***Meeting Minutes***

The draft meeting minutes from the June 12, 2019 meeting were presented.

A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Committee Member Matthews, seconded by Committee Member Lumgair, and carried unanimously. No discussion followed.

#### ***Membership Update***

Chairman Marsh opened the floor to those Committee members interested in participating in a Nominating Subcommittee to appoint new members. Committee Members Betit and Kolakowski volunteered.

- **Nominations for Northampton County Private Sector Member Vacancy**  
Committee Member Betit nominated Kerry Kobe, of the GIG, for Northampton County.
  
- **Accomack County EDA, Northampton County JIDA, ESCC, PDC Membership Updates**  
Committee Member Belknap nominated Kim Moore, of the Inn at Onancock, for the vacant Accomack County seat. Chairman Marsh welcomed additional nominations to be submitted electronically in the coming weeks.

Chairman Marsh made a motion to approve maintaining Joseph Betit, Dr. Mark Reiter, Ava Gabrielle-wise, and Sara Baldwin as members for the next term, seconded by Committee Members Phillips, and passed unanimously.

#### ***Attendance Record***

The attendance record for 2019 was presented. No discussion ensued.

### **Staff Update**

#### ***Informational Items***

- *Federal Opportunity Zone Guidelines Overview*
  - Shannon Alexander gauged continued interest in pursuing this workshop. The consensus was yes.
  
- *Go Virginia Update*

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- *Eastern Shore Update*—  
Shannon Alexander announced the Hampton Roads Sanitation District regional sewer report, which was completed in May, has been published to the A-NPDC website for improved public access. Committee Member Kolakowski noted that on December 10, the Northampton County Board of Supervisors voted to petition the state to be part of the HRSD sewer network, and that Accomack County is expected to do the same. He noted this makes the County part of the network, but does not commit it to installing any infrastructure on the ground, and that Towns would need to petition the state individually to connect to this regional network.
- *Broadband Update*—  
Alexander reported 60 miles of Broadband lines have been built of the planned 204 miles, representing significant progress.
- *Economic Resilience Items:*
  - *RAFT/CAWG & VA Resilience Funding Forum Update* –  
Alexander reported a CAWG Work Group meeting will take place at The Nature Conservancy on January 22 and that Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection Anne Phillips will be in attendance. Invitations are forthcoming.
- *Rural Coastal Virginia Community Enhancement Authority*  
Clara Vaughn reported that Accomack and Northampton Counties participated in a summit to launch the RCVA Community Enhancement Authority July 25. Counties will need to sign a resolution to join the Authority, which is designed to unify Rural Coastal Virginia to address shared challenges and create additional opportunities for the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Accomack-Northampton Planning districts to pursue funding as a united front.
- *USDA Rural Business Development Grant*  
Vaughn presented summary recommendations from the draft Feasibility Study for a Regional Marketplace, Food Hub, and Cooperative Marketing Opportunities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, which aims to identify strategies that, if implemented, will increase economic opportunities for local farmers, artisans, and aquaculture producers. Committee Members provided their feedback on the 13 recommendations following the presentation. Alexander asked for more information on the models used to develop recommendations and funding available to implement them. Committee Member Hickman agreed there is a need for an organizational structure for small farmers, but cautioned that a co-operative would not work well on the Eastern Shore. He cited the need to identify at what point a producer loses ownership of his product, and the need to ensure quality of produce. Committee Member Betit reinforced the difficulty of ensuring quality across a region due to the wide variety of growers and crops produced. Committee Member Hickman requested the group that would spearhead implementation of a collaborative marketing strategy and distribution be identified. Vaughn planned to distribute the study to via email to the full Economic Development Committee for review, so any comments can be considered in the final report.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

#### ***Overview of Updates to Regional Action Plans***

Alexander reported that the Aerospace & Defense Subcommittee did not meet following the July Economic Development Committee meeting, and the Foundational & Entrepreneurship Development Subcommittee did not update its plan during its meeting. The Committee agreed to postpone presentation of the updated Subcommittee plans for approval until the next regular full Economic Development Committee meeting.

#### ***Subcommittee Priority Goals***

Alexander opened the floor to those Committee Members wishing to provide input on the 1-2 goals outlined as top priorities for which to pursue progress in 2020.

- *Agribusiness and Food Processing Subcommittee*  
Committee Member Belknap requested a brief history of the Sawmill Project, which arose during previous SETS meetings. Committee Member Reiter suggested Future Farmers of America may be a higher priority goal for this Subcommittee. Alexander noted this project would involve a one-year concerted effort to pursue the project, which would result in significant progress or understanding that this is not a viable project to pursue further.
  
- *Foundational and Entrepreneurship Development Subcommittee*  
Alexander requested feedback from the Committee regarding a plan to have key Committee members attend Tourism Commission meetings, with coordination through Chairman Marsh, rather than forming an additional subcommittee. Committee Member Shotwell expressed support for this proposal. Committee Member Betit requested Alexander compile a list of the various organizations already engaged in marketing efforts to enable and improve collaboration and coordination across groups. Committee Member Belknap recommended establishing a liaison to connect these various organizations and improve cross-group communication. Chairman Marsh recommended pursuing a means by which individual groups can share their unique marketing plans electronically, with the goal of creating a master list embodying the various ways these organizations wish to be marketed, and using this to develop an implementation plan for marketing on the Eastern Shore.
  
- *Arts, Entertainment, Recreational, and Visitor Industries Subcommittee*  
No discussion ensued.
  
- *Aerospace and Defense Subcommittee*  
No discussion ensued.

Committee Member Belknap made a motion to pass the Subcommittee Priority Goals as presented, seconded by Committee Member Betit, and passed unanimously.

#### ***Subcommittee Plan Organizational Update***

Alexander requested feedback from the Committee on a plan to convert the Subcommittee Goals into an online working document, to be updated intermittently between full Economic

Development Committee meetings. The Committee expressed favor of updating plans in this way moving forward.

***ESVA Made & Grown Working Group***

Alexander proposed a motion be made in support of establishing an ESVA Made & Grown Working group. Committee Member Reiter made a motion, seconded by Committee Member Hickman, and passed unanimously.

**Regional Economic Development Plan**

***Regional Economic Development Mission and Vision Statement***

Alexander reported that the Committee will revisit development of its Mission and Vision statement at a future meeting.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be June 10, 2020, with Subcommittees to gather in advance of this meeting. Reminders will be sent ahead of these meetings.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m. upon a motion by Chairman Marsh, seconded by Committee Member Matthews, and carried unanimously.

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Robie Marsh, Chairman

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Elaine Meil, Secretary