

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission  
**Economic Development Committee**  
*Draft* MEETING MINUTES

March 31, 2014  
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  
Robert S. Bloxom, Sr.  
Robert S. Bloxom, Jr., Delegate  
Tom Riennerth, A-NPDC  
Caroline Massey, NASA  
Lynwood Lewis, State Senator  
Irene Davis, Accomack County  
Economic Development Authority  
Ava Gabrielle, New Road Community Development  
Wes Edwards (for John LeCato), Accomack County  
Economic Development Authority  
Kevin Dennis, Perdue Farms  
Dale Cook, Tyson Foods, Inc.  
Charlie Russell, WESR  
Keith Polana, Bayshore Concrete Products Corp.  
(for John Chandler),  
Linda Thomas-Glover, Eastern Shore  
Community College  
Charles McSwain (for Katie Nunez),  
Northampton County  
Rich Morrison (for Steve Miner),  
Accomack County  
Oral Lambert, Bay Creek Resort & Club  
Genevieve Walker-Switzer, T&W Block  
Dawn White, Dawn's  
Rick Hubbard, Northampton County  
Ralph Dodd, Ralph Dodd and Associates

**Members Absent**

Tommy Clark, Don's Seafood Restaurant  
and Tom's Cove Aquafarms  
Robie Marsh, BB&T  
Andy Mason, Mason-Davis Realtors

**Others present:**

Susan Simon, A-NPDC  
Jay Ford, Shine and Rise Farms (Presenter)  
Willie Randall, Edward R. Jones  
George Bryan, Small Business Development  
Administration  
Kerry Allison, Virginia Tourism Commission  
William Barnes, ES Manufacturing Commission  
Art Fisher, Citizen and former EDC Chair

**Call to Order**

The Economic Development Committee was called to order at 11:38 AM.

**Minutes Approval**

A motion to approve the Minutes from the August 21, 2013 meeting was moved and seconded.  
The Board passed the minutes by acclamation without revision.

## **Board Election of New Member Replacing Resigning Business Member from Accomack County**

The Chair introduced and read a short biography of nominee, Dawn White. The motion for Dawn White to replace the resigning member from Accomack County, Pam Barefoot, was moved and seconded and approved by acclamation, without dissent. Dawn White was welcomed to the Committee.

### **Introduction of Members**

Meeting attendees introduced themselves and their affiliation.

Senator Lewis informed the Committee of the following issues:

- Governor McAuliffe plans to visit the Eastern Shore to give his State of the Counties presentation on April 17<sup>th</sup> and would call attention to project plans;
- An important budget amendment to bolster designation as an FAA test site for the UAS runway for Wallops \$4-5 million project;
- The Eastern Shore Community College planning monies are in the budget to construct a new building at the community college;
- Coastal infrastructure assets survey to stage wind energy projects to develop resources;
- The Eastern Shore is in keen competition with several other rural areas for state funds, and he expects a “good spring 2014” for the Eastern Shore.

Delegate Bloxom informed the Committee that the House is working on three different budgets. The House Appropriations Committee will tour the Eastern Shore this spring.

### **CEDS Update**

Staff informed the EDC that a revised Year End CEDS Update was available on the A-NPDC website for the next 30 days and requested the Committee members’ review and input.

### **CEDS Projects and Performance Measures**

***Infrastructure/Recreational/Tourism*** — Staff reported that A-NPDC was awarded a grant by the U.S. Department of Transportation for a feasibility study for Phase III of the Southern Tip Bike & Hike Trail that originates at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge (ESVNR). The feasibility study will examine how to extend the trail from Capeville Drive to Stone Road at the Cape Charles entrance. An extended trail would be a major economic development boon to the town, the County, and the region.

Staff noted A-NPDC is updating the 2011 Bike Plan for VDOT. The update focuses on making Eastern Shore roads more “bike friendly” to: capitalize on the inherent bicycling advantages on the Eastern Shore; attract more tourists to the region; and improve quality of life for residents.

***Natural Gas Pipeline*** — A-NPDC is helping Accomack County find funds to extend the natural gas pipeline that a private company is proposing to build as far as the Perdue facility so the pipeline reaches and serves companies along Route 13. The pipeline project is progressing.

A-NPDC staff thanked the Committee and noted the EDC's "success story" letter of support to the Governor for Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). Virginia was selected as one of 6 test sites in late December, 2013.

**Wallops Research Park** — Committee Member Bales noted stories emerging about new domestic uses for UAS's with the recent news that Amazon and Google are exploring possible UAS applications for their companies. The research aspect for UAS is also good news for Eastern Shore economic development. The FAA is establishing an air transportation Center of Excellence (COE) for UAS's. Committee Member Massey told the Committee that the NASA/Wallops Research Park is on track to become a formal Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP) member, and is engaging Virginia companies to grow the Park and woo them back. Governor McAuliffe, and other dignitaries, will be on hand to cut the ribbon on June 9.

**Educational Support** —Vice Chair Glover informed the Committee of the Eastern Shore Community College's plans to replace the Administrative Building to bring it in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce development needs, and allow ESCC to expand into new program areas.

**Food Policy** —Guest speaker Jay Ford, founder of Shine and Rise Farm gave a presentation to the EDC about the Food Policy Council (FPC), and on-going efforts to rejuvenate the FPC to create a regional identity and use the FPS as a marketing tool to brand and sell locally grown products. Mr. Ford informed the Committee that 82% of ES agriculture is sent out of state, exporting our tax dollars and the value-added capability. He suggested a strategic rebooting of the "Buy Fresh/Buy Local" campaign that has proven successful in other areas. The Food Policy Council would also advocate toward an evolving societal standard for food that calls for organic, more nutritionally dense foods. Mr. Ford pointed out that the trend is to move towards more self-sustaining farms. FPC goals would be to get the Eastern Shore ahead of the curve with branding, developing our own version of "Buy fresh/Buy local"; advertising; encouraging businesses to buy from local growers; making the Eastern Shore synonymous with high quality; connecting Eastern Shore farmers to new and local consumers; and promoting agri-tourism with marketing and advertising to attract visitors to tour local farms. The Eastern Shore could "put a lot more on the table" by marketing and using the organizational capacity of the FPC as an aggregate to go after funds to promote the area and to set up demonstrations and food processing labs. Committee Member Bale cited the huge potential to use UAS technology to measure hydration, nutrients, and plant stress levels, noting a study that showed a 25-30% increase in plant productivity. Mr. Ford also recognized Northampton County's efforts to include hobby farms and niche farming in its zoning overhaul process.

Mr. Ford also talked about the need to integrate technology and the recent grant he received from Healthy Communities to create a demonstration of a food forest, only the third one in the country. The food forest mimics a forest ecosystem, except everything is edible. The demonstration food forest, located on the Central Green site, will be an opportunity to show what Eastern Shore farms could look like and the potential. He told the Committee that the national average for soy is \$800/acre. Gross revenue for a food forest is \$3,500-3,800/acre, and produces more tonnage per acre. The food forest puts money in farmers' pockets, helps conserve water, and produces high value products that can be sold in Virginia and regional markets. Mr. Ford said food forests could help tap the huge Hampton Roads market, and it makes sense to keep produce in-state to get the tax dollars. Mr. Ford expects his food forest

demonstration will provide concrete examples to farmers that the concept works and pays off. The food forests would help create jobs on the Eastern Shore.

***Expanding Business/Increasing Exports*** — George Bryon with the Small Business Development Administration (SBDA) told the Committee about SBDA's products and services. The SBDA's contributes to the Eastern Shore's growth and economic development by counseling and by providing small business training – at no cost – to Eastern Shore companies. The SBDA offers a 10 week certified course geared to help entrepreneurs set pricing, develop strategy, market effectively, break even, and write a business plan. The SBDA also helps advance the Governor's and the President's efforts to increase exports by counseling companies on tactics to expand markets and manufacturing footprint through sales of Eastern Shore products abroad.

### **Discussion**

Discussion ensued about the natural gas pipeline; the prime importance of infrastructure development on the Eastern Shore; the installation of a lift for large boats at the Harbor South Port; and progress on the bridge.

### **Public Participation**

A-NPDC staff introduced two visitors: Ms. Kerry Allison from the ES Tourism Commission, and Bill Barnes with the Eastern Shore Manufacturing Association. Ms. Allison announced the Tourism Summit's strategy to make tourism an economic development generator, noting that tourism is highly competitive and the two-county, publicly funded commission is working hard to bring more tourists to the region. Mr. Barnes told the Committee his regional, tri-state association was created to help manufacturers grow. The association's current focus is on Wallops, off-shore wind development, and other projects.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:37 PM.