



Washington County, MD Economic Development Commission

June 8, 2017

The annual meeting of the Washington County, MD Economic Development Commission (EDC) was held at 100 West Washington Street, Suite 1401. The following members were present: Julie Rohm (Chair), Gary Bockrath (Vice Chair), Michael Reyka (Secretary) via conference call, Hugh Breslin, Mike Fitzgerald, Andrew Loble, Ed Lough, Joshua Martin, Theresa Shank, and Janet Stiles Fulton. Ex-Officio members in attendance included Jill Frick, Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of Hagerstown and the Honorable Gregory Snook, President of the Hagerstown/Washington County Industrial Foundation. Excused absence was Jim Herbert.

Staff in attendance included Carmen Harbaugh, Kassie Lewis, Bob Mandley, Lauren Pogue, Rob Slocum, Linda Spence, and Sarah Sprecher. Also in attendance were Robert Bower, Andrew Sargent, Robin Ferree and Colin Plotica.

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Julie Rohm. She noted Jim Herbert was excused from the meeting. Ms. Rohm welcomed and introduced Robin Ferree, President of Bowman Development and student/intern Colin Plotica.

Election Results Announced – After tallying the votes for FY '18 Slate of Officers, Linda Spence announced Julie Rohm was re-elected as Chair, Gary Bockrath as Vice Chair, and Michael Reyka as Secretary. On June 6, 2017 the Board of County Commissioners approved the reappointments of Ed Lough, Michael Reyka, and Julie Rohm to the Washington County Economic Development Commission. Mr. Lough and Ms. Rohm will serve their second, three-year term, while Mr. Reyka is beginning his first, three-year term.

Approval of the Agenda - Gary Bockrath motioned to approve the meeting agenda for June 8, 2017 as presented. The motion was seconded by Andrew Loble. The motion passed unanimously.

Bowman Development Corp. – Robin Ferree updated members on current and planned development projects by the Bowman Development Corp., a division of The Bowman Group. Overall, the Bowman Group employs approximately 750 employees. D.M. Bowman leases more than 48,000 truck trailers which is the 2nd largest truck leasing company, second only to Warren Buffet. Bowman Hospitality recently added 24 rooms to the Holiday Inn at Railway Lane and will construct a Home2 facility with 106 rooms with plans to open Spring 2019. On the development side, a 12-acre pad-ready site is available at their Oak Ridge Mills site near the Premium Outlets, and a 16-acre pad-ready site is available on Sharpsburg Pike near the new Wal-Mart. Office space is available above the 28 South building, in the Bowman Business Park, and in the Masonic Lodge which is scheduled to close in July. The former Vishay Angstrom facility off of Volvo Way will be redesigned, converted into flex space, and divided into two 14,000 sf buildings. The Pepsi Refurb Center in Williamsport recently expanded its facility by an additional 30,000 sf. CertainTeed Corp. increased production over the winter which required them to temporarily lease an additional 27,000 sf for warehousing and distribution. A more permanent warehouse solution is expected in the future. Road accesses to allow for future development off of Showalter and Crayton Boulevard, as well as Hopewell Road to Route 63 are in the planning stages. The former Airpark Building with approximately 400,000 sf will undergo cosmetic fixes and building improvements. The building was recently vacated by Eldorado Stone who occupied nearly 250,000 sf of warehousing space within the building. Eldorado chose to move its operation to Pennsylvania. Other projects discussed included Westgate, Cedar Springs, Beckley Farms, Grumbacher Site, and Newgate I.

Elected Officials' Comments – There were no elected officials present. Ms. Rohm called upon Andrew Sargent of the MD Department of Commerce to comment on the *More Jobs for Marylanders Act 2017*. Mr. Sargent stated the program is the biggest tax credit program initiated by the State of Maryland in quite some time. The program became effective June 1, 2017. Washington County, MD is being looked at as a top tier candidate and more information is forthcoming.

Priorities and Organization – Rob Slocum explained a meeting was held with the EDC Board and feedback was obtained from a subsequent survey. The information was discussed with the EDC Executive Committee. Results determined that a protocol system should be utilized to quickly and easily identify members who are able to participate in project/prospect visits when deemed appropriate. The term “authority” ultimately translated into “involvement.” Sarah Sprecher distributed copies of the survey results noting EDC members were feeling unclear on expected goals and outcomes. An “EDC 101” packet will be developed for members as a re-education tool for existing and new members. The EDC will steer away from the term “committees” and begin using “Work Teams” that will be project specific, such as the Urban Improvement Plan, Mt. Aetna, etc. Pre-scheduled quarterly meetings with the BOCC will be conducted. Agendas will be changed to “consent agendas”, meaning Work Team and staff reports and discussion items are developed and distributed prior to meetings, questions asked during the meeting if needed, then consent to the agenda, leaving more time for Work Team productivity. There was discussion about utilizing a consultant or student intern from Towson University to develop a community impact statement that would be used to determine how we measure economic development successes. Business Retention and Attraction, Marketing and Communications, and Workforce Development are top concerns expressed by members in the survey and are a great place to begin moving forward with newly developed Work Teams. Greg Snook stated HCC is in the early planning stages to revitalize the Technical Innovation Center (TIC). In addition to building renovations, lab space upgrades and job training opportunities are being discussed. Education is expected to play a larger role in economic development initiatives in the future. Mr. Bockrath inquired whether or not HCC is exploring the idea of moving its TIC downtown given the fact the USM-H is downtown and the City’s Buro Box. Ms. Frick stated the City of Hagerstown has not had those conversations with HCC but may be open to discussions, noting it is not typical for governments to operate technical innovation centers.

Work Teams – Provided members are in agreement, Mr. Slocum would like to bring forward a program that is more program oriented rather than committee oriented. Julie Rohm reported the Executive Committee discussed transitioning its committees into Work Teams and would like to start with the structure of the EDC meeting. Members and staff will submit reports to Linda Spence in advance of the next meeting. One week prior to the next EDC meeting, all reports will be distributed (via email) along with the agenda. Questions arising from review of the materials provided will be addressed at the meeting, allowing more time for Work Team activities. Members identified four initial Work Teams, those being PAWR Grant, Tax Credits for Downtown, Gigabit City Promotion, and Economic Development Week. At the July meeting, the group will discuss the creation of a Work Team to promote the *More Jobs for Marylanders Act 2017* to manufacturers. Work Team Leaders are to complete a Work Team form that states a Goal (project-oriented goals), Value, Timeline, Stakeholders, Team Leader, Members from the EDC (including contact information, e.g., email and phone number), and Additional Team Members (including contact information, e.g., email and phone number). The form will be submitted to the EDC stating the name of the Work Team and who is already leading the Team. Members will be asked to join and questions related to the Work Team in between EDC meetings would be handled through email conversation. If there is a need or suggestion to create a Work Team not already in progress, members will present those ideas to Kassie Lewis, who will then send an email to members requesting input and feedback and whether or not they would be interested in participating on that particular Team. Julie Rohm requested an official vote to change the format of the EDC Meeting agendas. This change will require submittal of all reports and information be submitted to Ms. Spence no later than two (2) Tuesdays prior to all EDC meetings for inclusion in the Agenda Packet. If information is not provided, it will not be included on the agenda. *Gary Bockrath motioned to approve the change in EDC Meeting agendas and the timeline specified by Ms. Rohm above. The motion was seconded by Ed Lough and approved unanimously.*

Members discussed review of the Strategic Economic Development Plan for Washington County, MD (SEDP) for relativity given the document is nearing five (5) years of age and whether or not a review should be done before the determination of project-specific Work Teams. A suggestion was made and agreed the identified Work Teams which are already in progress would proceed. In the meantime, staff will review the 2013 SEDP and report its findings to the EDC to discuss the next steps in moving economic development forward. A separate mini retreat for September or October will be scheduled to discuss a strategic plan and future goals. The group would then hold mini retreats quarterly to allow time to get more in depth about identifying priorities and goals which will then be documented and presented at the quarterly meetings with the Board of County Commissioners.

Ms. Rohm mentioned a copy of the FY '18 Meeting Dates has been distributed to members. Meetings will not be held in August and December due to vacation and holidays. An Evite will be sent electronically in order for members to place dates in their calendar.

Increased tax assessment for downtown residential development – Michael Fitzgerald reported a lot of good information was derived from the data collected on downtown residential ownership and the taxes collected on homes that were rehabbed and sold to homeowners. A small grant program to benefit developers who buy homes in the downtown area, renovate them and then sell them to homeowners was being investigated. The grant would be based on the increased tax assessment value after renovations. Jill Frick stated the goal of increasing the assessable base is a great goal however it's not the funding source for this type of incentive because the tax assessments and the triannual are not catching up at this time. In addition, the group discussed how to attract more residents downtown. In the downtown development plan The Cultural Trail is being developed not only to be a trail to connect Arts and Entertainment but also to spur housing development along the trail. The next steps for the Work Team may be to create a package of materials to be presented to housing developers who may be interested in developing a 150-unit development along the trail.

PAWR Grant Update – Robert Mandley reported that Jim Herbert and Michael Reyka worked intensely on the grant. The grant was packaged and sent to the University of Maryland, who is acting as the “Submitter” as the directions stipulated. It was submitted on June 1, 2017 and a response indicating whether they are encouraging us or discouraging us is received within 14 days. No questions have been received from the project office to date. If encouraged, the date to submit a more detailed plan is the end of July 2017. The original submittal was eight (8) pages and a detailed plan could be increased up to 40 pages. The purpose of this grant request is to provide a wireless platform for use in multiple research projects. Two current projects were listed, one that is currently active project by the University of Maryland that is ready to be placed on the platform, and the second is our local concept of gathering data on the opioid issue. A lot of the funding will be designated to build the platform that will be used to transmit to the cloud for a large database. In a five-year window, if this Grant were to come to fruition, there will be a need for a data storage center to be built. Mt. Aetna Technology Park came to mind as a potential site for a data center. As a reminder, the Grant is for \$20M including cash and in-kind services. The primary Grant researcher is the University System of Maryland. Hagerstown Community College is also involved as well as the City of Hagerstown and Washington County. This project has opportunities to create a public/private partnership around the platform. A copy of the Grant will be sent to members for their review.

Open Session Project Status Update – Robert Mandley noted a response was submitted for Project River. The DBD was informed Washington County, MD made the short list of three (3) out of 14. The consultant has now requested potential incentives provided by the County. The project was originally presented as a performance center and now is being presented as a manufacturing center. Details regarding jobs and capital expenditures have not been made known at this time. There are several representatives from the Department of Commerce who are working with the consultant and ensure the *More Jobs for Marylanders Act 2017* is explained. A copy of the Agricultural Business Project Status Report was distributed to members.

New Business – Andrew Loble explained once a year Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics hosts approximately 20-30 employers and invites City and County business representatives to meet with them to try to sway them to

relocate to Washington County, MD. The annual event is scheduled in the very near future and will be forwarded for awareness and potential participation.

Old Business – Julie Rohm reported there is a need to fill three additional seats on the Executive Committee. After discussion, Mike Fitzgerald, Ed Lough, and Theresa Shank volunteered to fill the seats.

Closed Session Project Status Update – *Joshua Martin motioned to go into Closed Session to consider a matter concerning the proposal of a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State; or any personnel matters in accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland. The motion was seconded by Janet Stiles Fulton. Hearing no discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Open Session – *On a motion made by Joshua Martin to return to Open Session and seconded by Theresa Shank, the motion was unanimously approved. Present during Closed Session were Gary Bockrath, Hugh Breslin, Mike Fitzgerald, Jill Frick, Carmen Harbaugh, Kassie Lewis, Andrew Loble, Ed Lough, Bob Mandley, Joshua Martin, Lauren Pogue, Julie Rohm, Andrew Sargent, Theresa Shank, Rob Slocum, Greg Snook, Linda Spence, Sarah Sprecher, and Janet Stiles Fulton.*

Adjournment – *Gary Bockrath made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Andrew Loble. Hearing no discussion, the meeting was adjourned.*

Linda Spence, Business Support Specialist for the
Washington County Department of Business Development,
and,
Recording Clerk for the Washington County Economic
Development Commission