

**Minutes March 18, 2021**  
**Economic Development Authority of Middlesex County**  
**Electronic Zoom Meeting**

**In attendance:**

Gordon White, Chair  
Janet Riggs, Vice-Chair & Treasurer  
Celane Roden, Secretary  
John Anzivino, Member  
James Reed, Member  
Tom Feigum, Member  
Bill Cawthorn, Member  
Michelle Brown, Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator  
Shanae Hammond, Staff Clerk  
Kevin Gentry, Director of Information Technology

**Call to Order:** The virtual meeting (via Zoom) was called to order by Chairman Gordon White at 9:30 a.m. He read provisions for electronic state and local government meetings, emphasizing full public access to the virtual meeting and availability to the public of the recorded meeting on the EDA website.

**Roll Call & Quorum:** A roll call determined a quorum present.

**Approval of Agenda:** Chairman White presented the agenda for review. No additions were offered; motion by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Feigum to accept agenda approved unanimously by roll call.

**Approval of Minutes:** February minutes were presented. With no changes offered, motion by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Feigum to accept the minutes approved unanimously by roll call.

**Financial Report:** Mrs. Riggs presented the February Financial Report: cash balance of \$412,952.62; income of \$1,415.29 (VA Small Business Financing Authority bond fees) & \$252.79 (interest); & expenses \$6,064.95 (Deltaville Tap & Raw Bar 50% grant payment) & \$50.80 (software company for Cares Act Grant's 1099). Motion by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Feigum to accept the financial report, approved unanimously by roll call vote.

**Unfinished Business: Cook's Corner RCE Roof**

*Issue:* The RCE building roof has been patched!

*Discussion:* Mr. White reported the roof has been repaired by Martin's Roofing Company of Mechanicsville/Kilmarnock.

*Action:* Mr. White moved the Authority pay the invoice of \$950.00 upon receipt, seconded by Mr. Feigum. Passed unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Unfinished Business: Cook's Corner Property Marketing Plan & Search**

*Issue:* The Cook's Corner property is once again available for development market and the Authority through Mrs. Brown is promoting it for development. The DCHD grant remains active until the end of March, perhaps longer should DCHD extend the deadline.

*Discussion:* (Brown) Recruitment information has been provided to local, regional, and state resources (eg. local business/groups with interest, community stakeholders, Middle Peninsula Alliance, State VEDP flexible buildings listing). Commercial realtors show the most interest in the property (35 portfolio packets were mailed to locations in Richmond, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg and Middle Peninsula). Local developers (12 contacts) believe it is a viable business opportunity and good location but are hesitant to invest due to the economic challenges from COVID. Property has been shown three times (none committed); fast food franchise owners have been contacted but do not see enough traffic flow or population to support a fast food business plan.

A meeting has been scheduled on March 22 with DHCD to decide on the future of the grant (continue or dissolve). (Reed) There is interest in the African American community, but there are no details to share yet. Possible interest from business in Richmond. He may have more information in a couple of weeks.

*Action:* Motion by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Feigum: Contingent on the action of DCHD regarding the grant, the Authority should proceed to seek a commercial realtor for advice on the possible sale or ground lease price and begin to move forward with potential plans to sell the property.

*Motion discussion:* (Anzivino) Clarification requested. If grant deadline is extended does staff continue the developer search and if terminated move forward with a commercial broker? (White) Yes, a realtor hired either way (for sale or lease). (Cawthorn) Can Authority sell the property outright for a purchaser to do anything they want? (Brown) A sale would be subject to zoning restrictions. (Anzivino) The grant comes with its own requirements as well. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Unfinished Business: Review EDA Small Purchase Policy**

*Issue:* Revisions to the EDA Small Purchase Policy by EDA Attorney Heather Lewis were discussed at the February meeting; Mrs. Riggs and Mr. Anzivino were asked to review and revise document for the March meeting, based on issues identified in the February discussion.

*Discussion:* (Riggs) The document presented in the meeting packet includes revisions per last month discussion addressing (1) who may make small purchases or approve small purchase contracts when time does not allow for full Authority vote (changed from purchase/approval allowed by Authority Chair and Treasurer to purchase/approval required by two Authority officers); (2) competitive sealed bids or competitive negotiations (bids/negotiations not required for single purchases under \$12,500; purchases over \$12,500 not covered under this Policy but two competitive sealed bids or negotiation requirement); and, (3) solicitation of written bids or proposal requirements (none for less than \$2,500 and at least 2 informal written bids or proposals for purchases greater than \$2,500 and less than \$12,500).

*Action:* Mrs. Riggs moved that the Small Purchase Policy presented to the Authority this morning be approved. Seconded by Mr. Anzivino. Passed unanimously by roll call.

### **Unfinished Business: Transient Occupancy Tax Discussion**

*Issue:* The county transient occupancy (lodging) tax rate was raised in June, 2020 from 2% to 5% by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) with 3% difference designated for marketing, economic development and tourism work, per state code, to attract travelers to the area, increase occupancy at lodging properties and generate tourism revenues in Middlesex County. The 2021-22 EDA budget request includes presumed revenue from this source plus an additional contribution of \$49,821 for economic development and tourism management. Upon BOS approval, on June 1st fiscal management of the County Economic Development and Tourism budget will transfer from the County to the EDA. The Economic and Tourism Director position will also be transferred to the EDA budget, with the exception of payroll and benefits still to be administered by the County. Michelle Brown, Economic Development and Tourism Director, will manage these new funds and oversee economic development and tourism as an employee of the Authority. Discussion of this issue in the February meeting revealed the need for stronger understanding of EDA/BOS fiscal arrangements.

*Discussion:* The Board of Supervisors is expected to pass a Resolution authorizing the transfer of the additional 3% of the collected transient taxes to the EDA and a Memorandum of Understanding will outline the details regarding fiscal services to be provided to the Authority by the county. Mr. Anzivino and Mrs. Riggs are drafting a Memorandum of Understanding for Authority review and adoption.

(Riggs) We are working on MOU details with the new Assistant County Administrator who will provide fiscal services to EDA. A sample MOU from Warren County is providing guidance. We will bring a MOU draft to the April meeting. (Brown). Details still need to be ironed out with the county. The MOU needs to be approved by EDA and then on to the Board, but as the Board hopes to finish the budget in late April, the Authority may need a special meeting earlier to meet their timeline. Funding requested by the Authority is in the current budget plan but needs to be made official.

*Action:* Mr. White will keep the Authority advised of progress and set a meeting when the document is ready for approval.

### **New Business: Virginia's River Realm (VRR) 2020 Annual Report**

*Issue:* The VRR 2020 Annual Report is presented with numbers better than expected given, the dips in tourism the past year due to Covid.

*Discussion:* (Brown) The VRR is becoming a well-known brand, most especially with VA Tourism, as reflected by data in the Report (eg. social media "hits", website visits, and responses to special paid campaigns to attract visitors to the area.) New website additions include VRR's 8 great small towns listing that includes Urbanna, Deltaville, Saluda and Topping with direct connections to more visitor information for each town. Filters on the site easily direct visitors to information on local lodging, restaurants and area businesses. VRR has received 4 grants totaling \$50,000 to promote tourism in the area. For more in-depth information on the successes of the past year, the full report is available on the VRR website. *Action:* Middlesex County, through the EDA, has contributed \$25,000 to the VRR budget for the past five years. This is typically the time for the Authority to make the funding decision. Mrs. Brown asks to put off the decision until the Transient Tax issues are settled. Since the VRR fiscal year begins on June 1st and is in good financial standing, the decision can be delayed until May.

### **New Business: Walter C. Via Enterprise, RCE Storage/Water Installation**

*Issue:* The Authority has granted permission to Via Enterprise to store materials through the end of April for the water pipeline installation from Rosegill to Deltaville and Grey's Point.

*Discussion:* (Brown) Via Enterprise has requested storage extension until October rather than the earlier approval of end of April. Do we feel comfortable with this request as we market the property? (Anzivino) Why the extension? (Brown) Since the work is well on the way to Deltaville Cook's Corner is no longer the best location. Maybe they just want a time buffer. (Riggs) October is too long and will impact our ability to promote the property. (Riggs) Greg Chambers from the Water Authority is working with the Project Manager for a location closer to Grey's Point Road and Deltaville. A suggestion was made that the Authority authorize the Chair and Vice Chair to work out a solution. (White) Prefer not to extend beyond April but would be okay with May, if needed. (Anzivino) How much more work do they have in Saluda area? (Brown) Work is almost done in Saluda. It may take the Project Manager a couple of weeks to find a new storage site. (Anzivino) October is too long. (Cawthorn) Is the agreement in writing? (Brown) Yes, it is in writing per a letter of request from Via Enterprises and the Authority approved an April 30th date at the February meeting. (White) They are required to restore the property to its original condition.

*Action:* Mr. Anzivino moved, seconded by Mr. Feigum, that the Chair and Vice Chair be given the authority to extend the agreement beyond the April 30, 2021, date based upon the negotiation with Via Enterprises in finding a new storage location closer to upcoming construction in Deltaville. Passed unanimously by roll call.

### **Economic Development and Tourism Report - Michelle Brown**

**VEDP Economic Gardening Program** offers qualifying second stage companies with access to custom resources, data analysis and tools to identify and resolve growth challenges not typically available through traditional business assistance. Mrs. Brown has recommended this program to Rappahannock Oyster Company, Evolution Sales, Miller Marine, East Coast Boat Lifts and Atlantic Metals.

**VEDP Brownfields Restoration & Economic Development.** Department of Environmental Quality VA Brownfields left over funding beyond April 1st, if any, will be used as a rolling grant. The Cook's Corner property has no known environmental conditions for Brownfields unless asbestos is found in the building when renovation or demolishing begins. The funds could be utilized for that if determined to be needed.

**Virginia River Realm Feb Analytics data** is available to anyone who is interested.

**The Food Truck Initiative** will not happen until Fall at the earliest. The Cook's Corner property is not currently available. Difficult egress/ingress issues at the Saluda Farmer's Market rule this site out, so the prime on this initiative (Strawberry Street Events) has made other commitments. It could be a good marketing opportunity through awareness/visibility at Cook's Corner if still needed in the Fall.

**Arts in the Middle Creative Communities Partnership Grant, 2022.** The Virginia Commission for the Arts grant application is due April 1st. Mrs. Brown with Mrs. Roden's

assistance has completed the application for submission. Mrs. Roden expressed appreciation from Arts in the Middle for this financial support, stating the decision to move forward with the event in early June in the face of Covid would likely not have been made without the grant help.

**New Staff Assistant.** Mrs. Brown has hired part-time staff, Holly Oliver. She will work on social media, Visit Middlesex website, sales research and other special projects.

**VA Outdoors Foundation Grants.** Mrs. Brown will write a grant for \$25,000 (application due April 15) for the Cook's Corner Nature Trail to replace some of the lost CDBG funding. The grant will be through the County not the Authority.

**Local Business Updates.** Mrs. Brown reports Eckhard's is working with a realtor and she has listed the property on the VEDP site. It was recently shown to Rappahannock Oyster Company as a potential interest. Delta Pie is a new pizza place coming to Deltaville. They have requested EDA support, with the EDA grant application coming soon. Atherston Hall in Urbanna has been sold. It will be a private residence rather than a Bed and Breakfast.

**Middlesex County Broadband Authority Update - Kevin Gentry**

Zoom link for the Broadband Authority meeting this evening is available on the website. Mr. Gentry reports there is an RFP out for wireless internet solutions with two perspective vendors. Interviews will begin at the end of the month. This will include equipment installation on the towers in Jamaica. Two other possible solutions to watch: Dominion Energy partnership accessing energy infrastructure for fiber to the home (cautiously optimistic) and the Starlink satellite approaching our latitude with expectation it will be ready for Middlesex County by the end of 2021. Starlink is currently accepting deposits for equipment; hardware purchase is \$500 and monthly fee is \$99/month. (Roden) What is the status on the application to support work with Atlantic Broadband? (Gentry). Still pending but not optimistic. (Roden) This is a tough challenge. Thanks to Mr. Gentry. A solid county wide broadband system is as important to economic development in Middlesex County. Good to have water and sewer but without broadband the work will not be done. Starlink will be a good solution for those who can afford it, but many in the underserved areas of the county will not be able to do so.

**Adjournment:** Motion by Feigum, seconded by Riggs to adjourn. Passed unanimously by roll call.

**Next Scheduled Meeting:** April 15, 2021. An earlier meeting may also be scheduled as needed.

Submitted by:

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Celane Roden, Secretary

Approved by:

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Gordon White, President