

**Middlesex County Economic Development Authority  
January 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Gordon White, Chair  
Janet Riggs, Vice Chair/Treasurer  
Celane Roden, Secretary  
John Anzivino, Member  
James Reed, Member  
Bill Cawthorne, Member  
Hallie Holmes, Member  
Heather Lewis, Staff Attorney  
Holly Oliver, Staff

**WELCOME:** Chairman White opened the meeting of the Middlesex County EDA at 9:30 in the Boardroom of the Historic Courthouse. A quorum was determined by attendance roll call.

**BY-LAW AMENDMENT TO ALLOW AUTHORITY MEMBERS TO ATTEND AND VOTE VIA ZOOM MEETING:** Mr. White moved, seconded by Mr. Anzivino, to add language to the By-Laws allowing members to attend the meeting via zoom and creating policy guiding such attendance and votes, including acceptable reasons for zoom attendance. To officially attend via zoom and vote, the member must state at the beginning of the meeting their wish for a zoom accommodation, their reason, and the location from which they would attend the meeting. The Authority must vote to accept the request at the beginning of the meeting. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.

**ZOOM MEETING REQUEST:** Mr. Cawthorne requested to be allowed to attend this meeting via zoom, stated he was unable to attend because he was away, and was attending from 2301 Lawson Street in Venice, FL. Mr. Anzivino moved, seconded by Ms. Holmes, that Mr. Cawthorne be allowed to participate via zoom.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Chairman White offered a revision to the agenda, as presented, removing the closed session. Ms. Riggs moved, seconded by Ms. Holmes, to accept the agenda with the revision. Passed unanimously by roll call.

**2022 MEETING DATES:** Chairman White moved, seconded by Ms. Holmes, that the schedule of meeting dates included in the agenda be adopted for 2022. Passed unanimously by roll call. The Meeting Calendar: 1/27; 2/17; 3/37; 4/14; 5/19; 6/16; 7/21; 8/18; 9/15; 10/20; 11/17/ 12/8.

**MINUTES:** Chairman White moved, seconded by Mr. Reed, to approve the December meeting minutes. Passed unanimously by roll call.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Ms. Riggs reported her expectation that the lodging tax income will exceed expectations by June. The earlier proposal that the EDA purchase Quick Books online for county staff and Riggs to work jointly on Authority accounts was not approved by the County

Administrator; Ms. Riggs will provide Authority accounting services on a different online system. She will provide back-up info to Chairman White and others, as necessary, to assure continuity in her absence. Mr. Anzivino suggested it a good idea to revisit the MOU with the County regarding Authority financial management, as the County seems unable to honor the commitments made in the agreement. Mrs. Hammond clarified that issues with the County are with the County's current accounting system that cannot meet the Authority needs. The issue will be further discussed in the February meeting.

Ms. Riggs reported the Authority CD soon expires and will roll into the general account until the Federal Reserve raises interest rate (expected in March) to take advantage of higher rates.

Ms. Riggs presented in print the following 6-month report (June 2021 - December 2021) to cover the period. There was no report due to problems with implementation of the county system.

JULY: Income: 258.01 (interest) Expense: 4695.06 (compensation), 135.15 (supplies), & (liability insurance) Total July Expense: 6845.21

AUGUST: Income: 113.21 (interest). Expense: 2282.18 (compensation)

SEPTEMBER: Income: 85.56 (interest). Expense: 2346.77 (compensation), 37.61 (supplies). Total September Expense: 2384.38

OCTOBER: Income: 257.17 (int.), Fees: 13,548.75 (Middlesex Cty), 4045.98 (YMCA), 952.43 (VSBFA Christ Church); 15,645 (HRSD Easement Pay) Total October Income: 35,449.30

OCTOBER: Expense: 2949.61 (compensation); 2310 (ads); 299 (travel); 194.52 (telephone). Total October Expense: 5753.13

NOVEMBER: Income: 117.79 (interest); 6972.84 & 6972.84 (Rappahannock Westminster Canterbury Fees) 63,060.54 (Lodging Tax); 41,950 (County Contribution) Total Nov Income: 119,074.01

NOVEMBER: Expense: 3143.30 (compensation) 3540 (ads); 297.18 (supplies). Total November Expense: 7345.95

DECEMBER: Income: 105.23 (int); Fees: 2179.68 (YMCA), 349.74 (USBFA Christ Church) Total Dec. Income Total: 2634.65. Expense: 2626.74 (compensation)

Ms. Roden moved, seconded by Mr. Reed, that the financial report be accepted. Ms. Roden moved, seconded by Mr. Reed, that the financial report be a discussion of timing and process for preparing and distribution of financial reports expended to include the Board packet and preparation and distribution of all material for Authority meetings and online public information. Ms. Oliver will create a timeline for the next meeting, including deadlines for material submission.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **Tractor Supply Contract**

Mr. White moved, seconded by Mr. Anzivino, to approve the Tractor Supply Co. purchase contract for the Cook's Corner property statement by Gordon White before the Middlesex EDA on Jan. 27, 2022. We are ready to vote on the Tractor Supply contract. As I see this contract, it is the best chance Middlesex County has had since I came here, 26 years ago, to attract an important new company which will pay significant taxes and hire a number of employees, on an equal basis, of course, from among our citizens.

Looking around the Commonwealth of Virginia, I see signs elsewhere of citizens being forward-looking and those who are not.

I am somewhat familiar with a tale of two localities that went in different directions over recent years. In Mecklenberg County, they accepted new businesses. In adjacent Brunswick County, they did not.

In South Hill, the largest town in Mecklenberg County, things are thriving. New businesses have come in, employment is up. However, if you drive through Lawrenceville, the seat of Brunswick County, most of the storefronts are boarded up. The population is falling. It is sad.

I hope Middlesex County does not go the way of Brunswick County.

Since I moved here there have been two Dollar General stores built and a small shopping strip in Deltaville, anchored by an EVB Bank. That bank office has now closed. Two pizza restaurants there have come and gone. Eckhardt's, which was probably the best restaurant in Middlesex, has closed. Even Deagle's, once the prime boatyard in the county, where the *Miss Anne* and the *Sequoia* were rebuilt, has closed.

Tractor Supply Company is a growing national retailer. Bringing them will show that Middlesex can attract a growing business. Accepting Tractor Supply will demonstrate that there is life in Middlesex and that it is receptive to new businesses.

On the other hand, to reject it would send a message to both commercial real estate agents and businesses that Middlesex is not receptive to new businesses. The Board of Supervisors gave this property to the EDA for development in 2018 under a motion offered by Mr. Jessie and approved unanimously. The Supervisors subsequently gave the EDA \$100,000 to be used as a grant to encourage use of the site. As recently as last September, the Supervisors, again by unanimous vote, approved an MOU which cleared the way to, if necessary, demolish the derelict RCE building.

Tractor Supply Company has examined alternative sites. They have told us, in no uncertain terms, that they are not interested in coming to Middlesex except at the Cook's Corner site. The present contract has been negotiated until it appears to be acceptable to Tractor Supply Company and to us. I realize that there is opposition from a minority of the Board of Supervisors. But I believe a majority of both the Planning Commission and the Supervisors see Tractor Supply as a good business and a good neighbor which will enhance the Cook's Corner area. The issues which the opponents raise against Tractor Supply can rather easily be handled, along lines already discussed, and indeed, offered the EDA as recently as last summer. I hope that we can approve this contract. The motion gave rise to much discussion on both sides of the motion. Mr. Reed questioned the rapid movement forward on this issue, given concerns from the community regarding the location of the new business and best use for the property. He expressed concern that Tractor Supply was dictating the terms and location when the RCE building, and property, is of instrumental interest to many in the county. Others see it best used as a badly needed youth recreation park, fitness center for the elderly, and multiple uses for the

expansive kitchen in the RCE building. The erection of a Skate Park should have raised concerns about a Tractor Supply store on the property. County Parks and Recreation has plans for a recreation area in front of the Skate Park. Mr. Reed feels the Authority needs to ensure the development of this property is good for the whole county. Once Tractor Supply moves in, it cannot be undone. Ms. Holmes expressed her concern as well about the rapidity and secrecy of the Tractor Supply discussions and the loss of a recreation area badly needed for the County youth. She also pointed out concern in the community about the rapid commercialization of Cook's Corner. Ms. Roden suggested working with Tractor Supply for contractual agreement to be sensitive to, and respectful of, the nature of the youth recreation development behind their business. Mr. Cawthorne pointed out this is a Board of Supervisors discussion. The Authority was given the property by the BOS with the charge and support from the Supervisors to secure a long-term lease or buyer for the property. With the Tractor Supply contract, the Authority has honored that charge. Mr. Anzivino pointed out the property is a commercial area with sewerage and water systems installed for economic development. Recreation is an extremely important issue, but it is a county issue, not an EDA issue. EDA has been planning for a commercial use for the past 4 years. The building is in extremely bad condition with no disability access, badly needed expensive repairs, and likely asbestos, and the Authority would be on the hook for the brokerage fee if the contract is not honored. Ms. Riggs was sympathetic to the need for a recreational area but stated it is too little too late for this contract to be abandoned. Mr. Cawthorne suggested it is time for a vote. Ms. Riggs called the question. Ms. Roden again suggested the contract be revisited and requested an amendment to the motion to include an addition to require sensitivity to the youth activities on the adjacent property. Chairman White accepted the change, and Mr. Cawthorne seconded the motion with the change. Motion passed with yeas from all but Mr. Reed and Ms. Holmes, both of whom voted nay. Mrs. Lewis will draft the change in the contract. If Tractor Supply signs with the change, the issue moves onto the Special Use Permit process.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **EDA Executive Director Hire**

Mr. Anzivino and Mr. Reed will begin the process for recruiting and hiring a new Executive Director per the process approved in the December meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **ARPA Grant**

Middlesex County has received a 3-year, \$120,000 ARPA grant to promote tourism. The County to date has decided to administer the funds rather than pass them on to EDA. The Authority will still submit tourism ideas to the county. In doing so, Chairman White suggests we speak with tourism-related entities in the county: Campgrounds, Marinas, Museums, and Restaurants. His suggestion is to invite interested parties to an EDA meeting to share their suggestions. He also asked Ms. Oliver to put together potential marketing venues and costs. She presented a packet of options. Mr. Anzivino pointed out the Authority cannot move forward with marketing or other specific strategies without a plan to guide it. While the three years began January 1, and deadlines loom for spring advertising, it is more important to put a well thought-out plan in place before beginning to operationalize the grant. Ms. Riggs questioned why we are doing this work without sufficient information from the county and access to the grant portals. Ms. Riggs moved, seconded by Ms. Roden, that we communicate

with the county regarding the ARPA grant and request full access to the grant portals to determine requirements and parameters for the grant before we do any further work on it. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM REPORT** - Holly Oliver

- Virginia's River Realm - Ms. Oliver presented VRR Analytics for the past month and expressed concern that Middlesex County is not receiving sufficient coverage in VRR. Ms. Riggs and Chairman White suggested we invite VRR to meet with us to discuss how they are using the \$25,000 donation we make each year. Ms. Oliver will attend an all-day planning meeting with VRR in early February.
- Urbanna Pool Renovation and Boat Launch - Ms. Oliver has been in touch with Urbanna Mayor Hartley about their development plans for a new community pool and boat launch on Urbanna Creek.
- VTC Grants - Ms. Oliver has sent information on grant opportunities to AIM, UOF, MOM, Town of Urbanna, Piankatank Golf Course, Deltaville and Chesapeake Inns, VA Motor Speedway, and Deltaville Community Association.
- VCA Creative Partnership Grant - Ms. Oliver has submitted the final report for the 2021 VCA grant and has sent \$9,000 to AIM for the 2022 grant-supported June Arts in the Middle Fine Arts Festival.
- Lodging Tax: Ms. Oliver reported the September 2021 county-wide monthly lodging tax paid to the county: \$4,408.62. EDA receives receiving 3/5 of this amount.

**BROADBAND UPDATE** - Kevin Gentry

Kevin spoke to the Authority via speaker phone with a broadband update.

1. The county VATI grant with Dominion and All Points to provide service to all unserved areas of the county is beginning contract negotiations and information sharing with DHCD. Once the contract is signed, All Points will have 90 days to meet requirements.
2. The Four County VATI grant is also moving, slowed by a few bureaucratic issues. Middlesex County will be the first locality to be connected. Residents in the area to be served should begin to see door hangers with information. There is pending legislation in the state legislature to require broadband infrastructure to be included in new residential and commercial developments and to create service costs limits.

**ADJOURNMENT**: Motion by Mr. Reed, seconded by Ms. Riggs to adjourn. Passed without objection.

**Next meeting: March 17, 2022**

Respectfully submitted,

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Celane Roden, Secretary

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Approved, Gordon White, Chair