

Community Advisory Group Notes

Thursday, October 27, 2016 from 3:30 pm to 4:45 pm

Community Advisory Group Members

Present

Senator James N. Robey
Tammy Beideman
Kevin Bloom
Frank Durantaye
Reverend Joan King
Gary Maule
Ken McNaughton
Ron Peters
Debbie Slack Katz

Not Present

Simon Cortes
Andy Hall
Mark Hemmis
Timothy Kendzierski
Lori Lilly
Bruno Reich
Don Reuwer
Angela Tersiguel
Beth Woodruff

County Staff

Kate Bolinger
Jim Caldwell
Lisa Crow
Mark DeLuca
Joseph Herr
Jessie Keller
Phil Nichols
Karitsa Norman
Kristin O'Connor

Discussion Topics

Welcome – Senator, James N. Robey

- Senator Robey opened by thanking everyone for coming today.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – Senator, James N. Robey

- Table minutes from 10/20 for next meeting.

Economic Presentation – Ellicott City Partnership, Economic Development Authority, and Tourism

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Ellicott City Partnership (ECP)

- Maureen Sweeney and Karen Besson from the Ellicott City Partnership gave a briefing to the CAG.
- The organization has been around since July 1, 2013.
- There were two organizations; Ellicott City Foundation and Ellicott City Businesses, that merged to form the ECP to become a Main Street Community.
- Mission (pre flood) - to preserve the heritage and vitality of Historic EC while enhancing and creating economic growth.
- ECP gave an overview of the Board of Directors and pointing out that some individuals on the board are also on the CAG.
- Additionally, ECP pointed out that board members are all volunteers.
- While ECP does have a small staff that receive a salary, but they are mainly a volunteer organization.
- One major accomplishment for the ECP was being awarded the Benjamin Moore Main St. Grant to basically paint many buildings in the town.
- ECP's branding campaign rolled out in November, 2015.
 - Branding campaign worked with MICA to hand carve Ellicott City's logo to evoke the hand crafted feel.
 - It signifies how EC is a hand crafted town, so the branding campaign wanted to capture that in the logo.
 - CAG member pointed out the Town motto is "individually crafted since 1772".
 - ECP was working with Beth Burgess from County's DPZ to develop banners with new branding.
 - There were four big pole banners: Art, History, Dining, and Shopping.
- ECP has an awesome Promotion's Committee that pulls off the various annual events.
 - ECP provided a list of their annual calendar events.
- ECP, with Tourism is planning the Grand Reopening of Historic Ellicott City on Small Business Saturday which is November 26th.
 - Politicians will be present.
 - Baltimore Symphony offered to play that day which is really exciting.
 - Tourism has rented shuttle buses for Small Business Saturday so people can park at the Court House.
 - People want to support us.
 - Think it's going to go very well.
- Other events ECP is pushing are:
 - Girls Night Out-Nov. 17th
 - Midnight Madness-Dec. 2nd
 - Shop Local, Shop Late-Dec. 15th
- Prior to the flood, ECP worked with subject matter expert Garrett Glover, from the Small Business Association's Small Business Development Center.
 - ECP met him through the Economic Development Authority.
- Couple of things he pointed out:
 - Improve our retail mix.

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- Two groups: customers and tourists.
- He identified the need to work harder to attract people within a mile radius.
- People want to have ability to eat dinner, walk, and get coffee.
- Garrett was also good at pointing out simple façade improvements that could be made.
- ECP has conducted several workshops and meetings with property owners and businesses.
 - Have had really good attendance.
 - Held one Monday night for businesses owners with ~50 people.
- ECP is working with businesses on best practices and how you can improve.
- Garrett’s advice is the property owners need to bring in the right tenants.
 - Businesses that have a plan.
 - Businesses that are good for the whole community.
- Right before the flood, ECP was trying to develop a “Vision” for Historic Ellicott City.
- ECP was also developing an Economic Revitalization Strategy which is different than a “Vision/Master Plan”.
- After the flood, ECP has done the following:
 - To date, ECP has raised 1.5 million dollars for businesses and property owners.
 - Right after the flood, ECP distributed \$1,300 worth of gift cards.
 - \$80,000 was distributed through 500 mini grants for things like storage area, apartment space, etc.
 - Realized property owners and businesses going into buildings with mold, so ECP offered to pay 50% of Serve Pro costs (or whatever service) for the cleanup.
 - Received 299 relief and rebuilding grant applications.
 - Given out about 109 checks.
 - Most residents have picked them up.
 - Heritage Automotive contacted ECP to set-up a grants program and will be handing out checks for those that live in the community and lost their cars in the flood.
 - Heritage Automotive is the Toyota Dealership behind Double T.
 - ECP will stop accepting relief funds as of Dec. 31st.
- Giving Tuesday will be another big day for fundraising for an end of year donation.
- ECP’s Mural Project:
 - A lot of businesses opening on Main St., but there are buildings on both sides that are boarded up buildings.
 - Looking to have local artists paint the boards to make the community look more lively.
 - Maureen got the idea from Ireland when Obama went to visit in 2008.
 - Going to try to do the same thing here.
 - ECP was hoping to start the project this weekend but they still have more ground work to do.
 - ECP is working on the prototype using an artist who they worked with on other murals.
 - Will be working with EC Arts Coalition on the project to support local artists’.
 - Sponsorship for the project will be around \$1,800.
- ECP then talked about the potential future of Historic Ellicott City.

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- Pictures of the restaurant scene from Southeast DC were displayed.
- Would need bigger sidewalks to have outdoor dining, as shown in the picture.
- Walkability and Bikeability are important aspects
- There could be better ways for people to get into the town.
- Time clock picture displayed is meant to demonstrate the future in time.
 - What is the future?
 - When we get the clock back, is it going to go backwards or forward?
 - Hopeful that EC will be better than it was before.
- Senator Robey is looking for thoughts from the CAG.
- ECP is looking for community buy-in.
- What's the leverage with property owners?
 - It is important to communicate better days are coming and there are good tenants out there.
 - ECP wants to bring in more retail that people want.
 - ECP is working hard to get the property owners to work together.
 - This is where expert Garrett Glover comes in by talking to property owners on how to vet tenants better and look out for aspects like business plans and ones that are good for the community as a whole.
- What about business hours?
 - Looking at encouraging property owners and businesses to have later hours.
- It has been suggested that parking on Main St should be banned.
- Other ideas include looking at the bike tourism.
 - EC has a state park with the best mountain biking in the country.
- If you observe Bean Hollow on Saturday, there are bikes stacked up outside.
- If we can eliminate parking or get a garage, maybe have a bike lane and widen sidewalks?
- Comments that there would still need to be loading and unloading areas.
- Maybe have 15 min parking by Phoenix for customers that just run in and out?
- Questions/comments regarding the utility poles on the sidewalks.
- Problem is here there is granite that is tough to dig through and you would have to put in large vaults.
- Power lines should be cleaned up.
- Request has happened before and some were removed but don't know if it was comprehensively done by the utility companies.
- CAG can make that recommendation to be explored further.
- CAG member commented that they talked to BGE guys who say it would be closed for a year for that kind of work to be conducted.
- ECP commented that the number one thing that comes up for design changes is on the issue of the utility poles.
- CAG member commented that challenge is that we are in the forest and too close to the problem, how do you create that view from the outside that is sustainable within your organization?
 - ECP has a long-term vision/picture.

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- ECP commented that the town is unincorporated, whereas other areas are incorporated.
 - People need to keep that in their minds.
- Frederick is bigger, but that doesn't mean Historic EC can't be a small version of Frederick.

Economic Development Authority (EDA)

- Vernon Thompson with EDA gave a presentation to the CAG.
- EDA is a quasi-government entity that operates under a MOU with the County and has general funds to operate.
- Unique to the state, EDA has a Center for Entrepreneurship where 45 resident companies and 23 residents are housed.
- EDA also has a County Technology Council that is very active and comprised of Cyber, IT, Healthcare IT, etc. collaborating together and pushing industry sectors.
- EDA also has a business development function that handles the recruitment and retention of local businesses.
- Interestingly enough, EDA did not work with retail businesses before July 29th.
- EDA has been engaged with Historic EC for a while.
- Prior to the flood, EDA engaged in the planning process with the Office of Emergency Management's Emergency Operations Plan: Emergency Support Function #11.
- During this planning process, EDA's role was established during an emergency.
- EDA contributed \$100,000 to ECP for marketing efforts.
 - They provided that funding to support the transition from two separate organizations into the Ellicott City Partnership.
- Considered hiring a Main St. Manager to qualify and participate in planning for what the future of EC could be.
- Talked about motivating merchants and marketing for Historic EC and began working with the Small Business Development Center.
- Consultants worked very closely with EDA.
- That's where Garrett Glover was introduced to ECP.
- Planned workshops for the merchants to work together.
- During the flood, EDA contributed 4,000 man hours of about 10 people for response efforts.
- Coordinated 500 missions to EC at an early stage to take people down to get their inventory, as well as arrange visits for structural engineers.
- Catherine Bedolla and Mark Thompson from EDA played a huge role in these efforts.
- ECP and Tourism and have been great partners with EDA.
- Disaster has really drawn everyone in together.
- EDA has held different information sessions with about 119 attendees to address things like insurance issues with recovery, lending, construction permits, etc.
- For flood recovery EDA has initiated ongoing case management where they maintain an inventory of what companies are in what stage at what time.
- EDA has been engaged in this case management function until around mid-Sept. but needed to pull out of the field.

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- DHCD received \$5 million in funds and EDA is working to use those funds to move the recovery forward.
- It just didn't play out the way we thought it would as the state agencies are not built to be onsite.
- Currently in the process of negotiating with DHCD on their role with the recovery process.
- EDA started working with resources to do bridge financing in the meantime and are looking at what the resource requirements are for business recovery.
- Not everyone can afford to borrow money at this time.
- But EDA is working nonetheless to revitalize Historic Ellicott City.
- What EDA is seeking to do is find the delta in recovery efforts where businesses have been typically funding and the additional cost of flood proofing buildings.
 - Currently looking for a way to make up that delta.
- EDA has served as the liaison to the businesses with all agencies and organizations focusing on recovery of Historic EC.
- Additionally, EDA is working on having space located on Main St. that will be called, "Millworks" to serve as a resource center with co-working space hoping it can transition into an incubator for downtown in the future.
 - There is a lot of interesting talent in the area so EDA would want to provide a space for those displaced by the flood.
- Others can use this space to meet the needs of the community like Joe Herr (Recovery Manager) is looking to possibly have a desk there.
- Will have someone there full-time.
- This space is something that's really needed.
- EDA then discussed efforts for long-term planning for Historic EC.
- EDA needs to worry about Monday.
 - Engaging with businesses on a case by case basis.
- EDA is bringing in the Urban Land Institute, Technical Advisory Panel, to address branding, vision, tenant make-up, selection, and marketing.
 - Trying to do things that are consistent with the Dept. of Planning and Zoning's Master Plan process.
 - This idea was vetted through DPZ's Director to ensure it didn't conflict with their process.
 - Technical Advisory Panel will bring a group of experts for a short period of time.
 - This group will focus on tangible actions to take.
 - They will look at short-term projects like branding and strategic direction.
 - Looking at supplemental, broader technical expertise.
 - This effort will happen in the near term, possibly December, where they will try to turn around results quickly.
 - The panel will offer different vantage points from outside experts.
- Two points were also emphasized:
 - 1) Look to get permanent funding for ECP and their Main St. efforts so when EDA has wrapped up recovery efforts, ECP is there and functional.

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- 2) Need to pay attention to retail mix. This is now a redevelopment effort.
- Question posed by a CAG member, is part of your plan to help retail businesses on promotion, are you promoting the stores opening this Saturday?
 - Need to have that process in place to promote businesses reopening in conjunction with Tourism and ECP on social media.
 - There are radio spots on WYPR, sponsoring the economic report in the morning.
 - 8 rotations a week, promoting things about the County as well as EC merchants.
 - Need to add a tag at the end, for more information visit the website, but probably need to do something more.
 - Weinstein's Office is also promoting businesses reopening in his Newsletter.
 - Every time we have an opening, we want to make a big deal.
 - Changing the narrative that EC is back and open for business.
 - That narrative has to be collectively switched from recovery to back to business.
- It feels like there is good collaboration and attention to EC.
 - What do you think has changed?
 - ECP engagement with Tourism and EDA.
 - Business owners are working together now and there is a tremendous sense of community.
- CAG comment that EC use to be a great shopping town with retail.
- Key is to work on getting that right balance and mix.

Howard County Tourism

- Amanda Hof, Director of Community Development from Tourism presented to the CAG on behalf of the Director.
- Like EDA, Tourism is a quasi-government entity funded from the hotel tax.
- Mission is to increase tourism to Historic Ellicott City and to drive overnight visitation and to be keenly aware of the back yard customer.
- Tourism has a lot of efforts that occur outside of the County.
 - Have an entire dedicated staff that work outside of the County to represent as a destination for sporting events, weddings, etc.
 - Tourism works on the entire market place Nationally and Internationally to bring in businesses, membership program, and they also operate the Welcome Center located on Main St.
- Purpose of the presentation is to talk about what their role has been, what it is now, and where we are going in the future.
- The State Office of Tourism developed a lot of studies at the state level to determine whose coming and what they are spending.
 - This study will be ready 2017.
- State put information out regarding the overnight visitor's top ten activities.
- The day trip activities look very similar.
- The good news is Historic Ellicott City has 6 out of the 10.

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- State typically markets to a specific consumer, generally its women that make travel decisions so this is what Howard County Tourism mirrors.
 - Women
 - 20-65 age range
 - Household income around \$70,000
 - Well educated in managerial/professional occupations
- Studies looked at individuals that have made a trip more than one day in the US over the past 12 months for business or leisure.
- Visiting family and friends ranks highly for traveling purposes/reasons.
- The overnight visitor market is generally within a 60-200 mile radius outside of the County.
- Marketing inside the County is primarily conducted digitally by following people's behavior online.
 - This allows more targeting marketing to the ideal customer.
- Moving on to EC, Tourism has the Welcome Center, where in FY16 it saw 35,000 visitors.
- Tourism will be the host for the official Historic Ellicott City reopening ceremony on Small Business Saturday (11/26), where the Welcome Center will be the host location for the official ribbon cutting.
- Tourism will host the holiday street lighting/midnight madness on Dec. 2nd.
- Tourism also plans to have a permanent display of the flags in honor of the two lives lost in the flood.
- In FY 16, tours brought in 1600 guests.
 - Tour operation is on pause but will resume in spring 17.
 - Tours include ghost tours part I & II, tasting tour, and elementary school heritage tours.
- Activities, prior to the flood include having the Welcome Center, as well as sales and marketing offices located on Main Street.
- Hosted travel writers at restaurants, shops, historic sites, etc.
- Sponsored events, such as the holiday tree lighting, movies, concert series, etc.
- Tourism had a renewed interest in working with ECP on economic revitalization discussion from the spring until the flood, but are continuing those efforts.
- Tourism is working with SHA on Tourism Corridor Attraction signage.
- Exchanged board seats with ECP.
- Tourism discussed specific activities post flood.
- Since the flood, they have been working with ECP on upcoming events now that more businesses are beginning to open, and that's where Tourism comes in to get the word out.
- Working with recovery efforts since day one following messaging from the County on social media.
 - Transitioning the message now to "it's open, come".
- Working with ECP on "Opening Soon" signs.
- Sponsoring holiday greens for entry ways and Tiber Park.
- Waived Membership fees for Ellicott City businesses.
 - Businesses already a member will not need to pay renewal.
 - New businesses can join at no charge.
 - Membership includes listing in visitor's guide, on the website, media inclusion, a lot of benefits.

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- Prior to that decision, Tourism lowered dues for all Howard County businesses to \$50 in order to be more accessible to all businesses.
- Wanted to make sure we represent what the County has to offer, now it's affordable and accessible to everyone, even working with non-profits.
- A Destination should be:
 - Welcoming
 - Clean
 - Safe
 - Accessible
 - Diverse in its offerings
 - Fun
 - Memorable
 - Unique
 - Brand
- On the brand component, Tourism has been at meetings with ECP and they are doing a wonderful job.
 - It's an awesome brand that can be placed on merchandise.
 - There are other ways businesses can contribute and bring Historic EC together as a brand.
- Being open is vital to bringing in people.
- Welcome Center is open 7 days a week where people come to visit.
- The challenge has been the Welcome Center is open on a holiday Monday and not a lot of businesses are open so people leave and don't come back.
- Garrett Glover from SBDC has been talking with ECP about wonderful shops existing and bringing in more of a mix.
- Some examples include Modern Home Goods, Int. brands, picture of an Annapolis Tervis mug, Vans shoe line, but not necessarily having a corporate brand store.
- Small businesses can carry a national brand.

Closing – Senator, James N. Robey

- There are still a lot of people in the community that don't know what this committee does, so please let folks know what the CAG is doing. Please share and get the word out about what the community is learning.