

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CAROLINE COUNTY
109 Market Street, Room 106, Denton, Maryland

WORK SESSION
September 14, 2021

Present: President, Larry C. Porter; President, Daniel J. Franklin; Vice President Wilbur Levensgood; Commissioner, Stewart Barroll, County Attorney; Jeremy Goldman, County Administrator; and Kaleigh Leager; Executive Assistant

Topic One: Status of the Departments

1. Office of Tourism: Tara Hill-Coursey

The Office of Tourism is continuing to contribute to local publications, advertise outside of our community and to states that are a few hours or days-trip away. The goal is to attract people from all over to come and see what Caroline County has to offer. The County has beautiful State Parks and plenty of outdoor recreation options. The Office of Tourism has been successful with their social media campaign, updating their website, and making sure the public has access to information regarding upcoming events throughout the County.

Commissioner Levensgood mentioned that a local fire department will be hosting a shrimp feast in October and will be providing her with the information so it can be put on the website. Commissioner Franklin followed by asking if there has been any interest on opening any type of craft beer breweries within the County? Ms. Hill-Coursey mentioned she has not seen anything yet but would welcome anyone who is interested to reach out for more information and assistance.

Administrator Goldman asked about the female to male engagement ratio; do women visit the county more than men? Ms. Coursey-Hill said she did not have those statistics available. Commissioner Porter asked Ms. Coursey-Hill if there was a way for the Tourism website to be a way for municipalities to schedule their events around each other to prevent overlap. For example, a lot of town fairs are always scheduled on the same dates. Commissioner Porter also mentioned the importance of advertising for the local museums.

2. Office of Economic Development: Debbie Bowden

The Office of Economic Development is continuing to grow and flourish. Ms. Bowden recognized Ms. Kendall Teague, Business Coordinator and Mr. Chris Door, Temporary Grant Coordinator for their hard work and importance to the department's success. Ms. Bowden mentioned that the department recently closed their non-profit grant in the amount of \$100,000. Organizations such as the Humane Society, CASA, the Chamber and Fire Departments that did not receive other grant funds, were awarded.

Ms. Bowden mentioned there has been a lot of interest in starting new small businesses. In coincidence, it is currently small business week. She has received a few requests for

small business grants and has been able to refer them to the State for assistance. Currently, the economy in Caroline County is healthy. A common problem is that businesses cannot find workers and the supply chain for materials very frustrating, high demand with a very limited supply. The Ridgely Tech Park is continuing to be advertised and is looking to become a business's home.

The Office of Economic Development has good working relationship with the Maryland Department of Commerce and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Commissioner Franklin mentioned he is refreshed to hear of the renewed effort and interest in the Ridgely Tech Park. Commissioner Porter expressed his concern with businesses relying on all of these grants because they will no longer be available in the very near future and he is concerned it is a crutch for some folks and doesn't want to see them fail when that support is gone.

Topic Two: COVID-19 Response Discussion

Robin Cahall, Health Officer, Caroline County Health Department started this discussion with the most current COVID statistics for the County and State. Caroline County's 7-day positivity rate has decreased by 18.9% and the State has decreased by .4%. Currently, Caroline County is still under a high transmission rate and has had 70 new cases within the past week. Mrs. Cahall also mentioned that most of the cases have been of the Delta Variant. Booster information should be available in the next few weeks. The Health Department plans to include booster clinics in the regular clinics. However, the appointment requirement for testing is going to be reimplemented due to the overwhelming amount of testing demand. Mrs. Cahall also mentioned there a home test kit, but the issue is the supply of in-home tests. Commissioner Porter asked how accurate the in-home tests are? Mrs. Cahall stated that there are more accurate for folks who are showing symptoms than who are asymptomatic.

Currently, the State is awaiting vaccine mandate guidance from the Biden Administration. Currently, any employer with over 100 employees or if the company receives any federal funding is to follow the vaccine mandate. Clarity is still needed on if weekly testing will still be allowed in place of getting vaccinated.

Administrator Goldman stated that guidance from the Commissioners is needed on what they want to do when the guidance is released? Mrs. Cahall mentioned that she suggests a layered prevention strategy. However, a strategy cannot be made until guidance is released and more information is obtained. All three Commissioners agreed that they are here to do what is in the best interest of our community and the people of this County. Commissioner Porter stated that everything is ultimately a choice. He is against mandating vaccines and against penalty for not getting vaccinated and against monetary reward for getting vaccinated. Commissioner Porter also mentioned that it is his job as a representative of the County to ensure that all resources are available to the public if people so choose to pursue them. All three Commissioners agreed that they have no interest in incentives, penalties, or mandates. In conclusion, Commissioner Porter mentioned that he would like to see a realistic tiered plan that makes sense for our County's population that is easy to read, understand, and explain.

There being no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Kaleigh E. Leager

Kaleigh Leager
Executive Assistant to The County Commissioners