

**Remarks to the King William County
Economic Development Authority
January 12, 2022
7:00 p.m. – Board Room**

Good Evening Mr. Chairman, Members of the Authority. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this evening and discuss some thoughts I have on economic development and commercial and industrial growth in the County.

First, let me acknowledge members of the Board of Supervisors who are here. Also with me is no stranger to you, now Deputy County Administrator Steve Hudgins.

Early Weeks in the County

I have been your County Administrator now just over five weeks. As you might expect, I am still feeling my way around both the government circles and the County as whole. I thank the Board of Supervisors for their confidence in me.

I see bringing stability to government operations among my highest priorities. That begins with getting Staff on the same page on what we need to accomplish. Then getting people to have a “do not fail” attitude regarding problem solving and project development. Whether it be by individual or a team of workers, there is nothing ever accomplished by blaming someone else, or sitting back waiting on somebody else to move the ball down the field.

I have learned in my short time here we have a talented workforce. Coming up with a script for them to follow is what is in the works now. We want to get away from crisis management and more to developing a plan that ends in results. In the economic development world, that equates to private investment, creation of jobs, expansion of services and a more diverse tax base.

Developing an Economic Development Strategy

In the last five weeks, King William has gone from not having an economic development director to two people in charge of that effort – Mr. Hudgins and myself. That is not to say we will not eventually hire an Economic Development Director, but in the short term, Steve and I will head up that effort.

We will develop the framework for promoting economic development. It will be a function of our government that deserves daily attention and not a reactive posture where we answer the phone when it rings, follow-up on a referral when we get one or make up our strategy as we go along just to fit who we might be talking to at the time.

Not that all of those things aren't important. They are essential. But we have to be set on what our message is far in advance of leads being generated. And the theme to our strategy has to be the message that “King William County is open for business and we want your investment if it fits into our culture, our history and future landscape development.

What Does that Economic Development Framework Look Like?

If you are looking to check some boxes, local government has to commit to certain fundamental ideals to be successful in economic government.

1. A commitment by the Board of Supervisors.
2. An active Economic Development Authority. (Define the role in a little while).
3. Staff leadership which you have in me and Steve and Planning and Zoning Director Sherry Graham.
4. A Comprehensive Plan that is a living document that tells us where we want development and where we don't.
5. The presence of water and the ability to collect and dispose of sewer. The preferred way is through public utilities. However, you can't dismiss altogether the use of well and septic. Either way, you need a utility strategy.
6. A labor force. In November, the unemployment rate in King William was 2.4 percent. Not many people left without a job in the County. Less than 100. So we have to be able to recruit from other places.
7. Incentives. We need to identify areas where we can establish Enterprise Zones, which qualifies businesses for certain incentives such as deferment of paying Machinery & Tools taxes. We might have to develop a cash reserve fund that helps put a business just over the hump when they are deciding property in our County vs. another locality.
8. Transportation. Working with state officials to establish road patterns that are safe and non-intrusive to businesses, especially those who are manufacturing goods where products need to come and go.
9. Understanding the business recruitment process. State, regional and local contacts coming together. Steve and I have had conversations with VDEP and we are scheduling a meeting with the Middle Peninsula Alliance, which will field leads from the state and VDEP.

What is the Role of the King William EDA?

1. All of us get behind one strategy. It is not BOS driven, Planning Commission driven, Staff driven or EDA driven. It is all of us doing our part and saying the same things. City of Danville is a leader in this state and it all started with communication.

2. Appoint subcommittees that Staff can work with to nurture and massage topics and situations. For example:
 - a. Lead Development
 - b. Business Retention
 - c. Site Development, which includes establishment of Enterprise Zones.
 - d. Incentives & Proffers
 - e. Analysis of Business Taxes
 - f. Ordinance Development
 - g. Federal & State Law Monitoring

3. Establish a Business Roundtable

Closing

Growth is always met with mixed emotion. But there is a difference between growth and development. Development is planned and orderly on the County's own terms. Growth just takes over without oversight and input and 10-15 years later you ask yourself "How did we get here?"

I look forward to working with you to reach our maximum potential and expand opportunities for our residents.

Thank you for listening.