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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Crisfield Designated as Newest Maryland Arts and Entertainment District - Arts & Entertainment Work Session July 19 Open to the Public.**

Mayor Kimberly Lawson, the City of Crisfield Council, and City Manager Richard Pollitt and the Crisfield Arts and Entertainment District (CAED) Project are proud to announce the City of Crisfield's status as the location of the newest State-designated Arts and Entertainment District. There will be a public work session at the Crisfield Library, 100 Collins Street, from 5 pm to 6:30 pm on Thurs., July 19 to discuss moving forward with the goals for the Crisfield Arts and Entertainment District. Steven Skerritt-Davis, Program Director of Arts and Entertainment Districts at the Maryland Arts Council, will be in attendance to answer questions. The public is invited to attend this session. More information can be found at [Crisfieldarts.org](http://Crisfieldarts.org).

The City of Crisfield submitted a 200-page application to the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) for designation as an Arts and Entertainment (A & E) District in April of 2018. The application for A & E Districts specifies "The State's Goal is to develop, promote and support diverse artistic and cultural centers in communities throughout Maryland that preserve a sense of place, provide unique local experiences and spur economic revitalization and neighborhood pride." More information on Maryland Arts and Entertainment Districts can be found at [www.msac.org/programs/arts-entertainment-districts](http://www.msac.org/programs/arts-entertainment-districts).

Locally determined property tax incentives are required for A & E designation. Somerset County Commissioners and the City of Crisfield Mayor and Council both approved generous incentives which include a 100% tax credit on the increase in property value due to renovations for property meeting qualified arts and entertainment use.

An Income Tax Subtraction Modification allows qualifying artists who reside in Maryland to reduce their state taxable income for sales of work created and sold in any of the 26 A & E Districts in the state. This includes internet sales originating in an A & E District. Part of the strength of A & E Districts is that an artist may work and sell their art in any of the Districts. For example, an artist creating work in the Snow Hill or Salisbury A & E selling in the Crisfield A & E, or vice versa, would qualify for the income tax incentives.

In addition, an Admissions and Amusements tax incentive was approved, which allows qualifying entertainment venues to be exempt from taxes on cover charges. All A & E tax incentives are good for 10 years, until 2028.

A newly founded 501 c 3 non-profit, the Crisfield Arts and Entertainment District (CAED) Project, will provide support for the management and fundraising for the A & E. A good working relationship has been established between the CAED Project and the City, and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed to specify each organization's responsibilities. The CAED Project is chaired by Carol Heck, with vice-chair George Friedley, treasurer Bill Brown,

secretary Claire Otterbein, and board members Bruce Stasi and Jim Neal. The application was created with much support from the A & E Application Committee. All are welcome to participate in the Planning Committee moving forward, with the first meeting on July 19.

The CAED Project also contracted with BEACON through Salisbury University to create a marketing plan which it will now begin to implement. The core of this plan is leveraging funding with other organizations with overlapping interests.

The new A & E will be administered by Jennifer Merritt, the Circuit Rider for the City of Crisfield. The Circuit Rider position is funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and provides administrative assistance to smaller towns. Jennifer can be reached at [arts@crisfieldcityhall.com](mailto:arts@crisfieldcityhall.com).

Artists – including writers and performing artists such as actors and musicians – form the core of an A & E District. To see the artist community for the Crisfield A & E, or to register as an artist, go to [Crisfieldarts.org](http://Crisfieldarts.org).

Many individuals helped make this designation possible. In addition to the artists, the City of Crisfield would like to thank all of those who participated in the public meetings, and especially those who participated in the A & E Application Committee. You are responsible for making this application a success through your participation.

The City of Crisfield would also like to thank the Crisfield Arts and Entertainment District Project for their work not only to get the application approved, but all the many hours of work that will be necessary going forward. The A & E District could not succeed without this organization.

The City would also like to thank the Somerset County Commissioners for approving generous tax incentives, and Economic Development Coordinator Michael Day of Snow Hill for his assistance with public meetings. We would also like to thank Audrey Cornelius, GIS Technician/Zoning Specialist at Somerset County Commissioners for her tireless work with the many required maps.

The list of those involved with this process is quite long. If you had a hand in it, thank you for getting us to this point and we sincerely hope you will continue to be involved moving forward.

In order to make the A & E District and economic and artistic success, community participation will need to continue at the same high level. There is room for all positive ideas and activities in the new A & E. Get in on the ground level and help shape your A & E by attending the July 19 meeting or signing up at [Crisfieldarts.org](http://Crisfieldarts.org) to be notified of future meetings.

Upcoming events in the new A & E include 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Bay Strolls, with the next 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 4 to 7 pm at the Crisfield City Dock. For a full listing of events, see the website.

Please consider supporting the Crisfield Arts & Entertainment District by becoming a member of the Crisfield Arts and Entertainment District Project at [Crisfieldarts.org](http://Crisfieldarts.org).