

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

October 5, 2022

PRESENT

Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Danny DeMarinis (Mitre Corp), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Sandra Edwards (Acting Dir., OED), Jeff Emmons (Delmarva Power), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Ed Jones (Northrop Grumman), Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Morgan Miller (CCPL), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Dr. Carl Roberts (BDC), Richard Starr (OED Coordinator),

ABSENT

Woody Jackson (Citizen), Kim Justus (SWN), Sharon Kurfuerst (Christiana Care/Union), Bob Meffley (CC Council), Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald (OED Agribusiness Coordinator), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancenter)

GUESTS

Debbie Brown (CC Chamber of Commerce), Scott Flanigan (CC DPW), Christie Griest (Tourism), Bob Miller (Chesapeake Gold Farms), John Ness (West Cecil), Susan O'Neill (USRC), Steve Overbay (Director of Administration), Sharon Pelham (APGFCU), Brigitte Peters, (MD Dept. of Commerce), Kim Ray (Tourism), Dan Schneckenburger (Uppershore Workforce Investment Board), Alan Sexton (SWN), Toni Sprengle (BDC), Maura Van Syckle (SBDC), Andrea Vuncannon (APGFCU), Karen Zuccardi (TEDCO)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m.
- September 7, 2022, meeting minutes approved

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

- MD 5 Star coming up!

Director's Report – Update on Economic Development – Sandra Edwards, Acting Director

- Harvest Dinner held - ~ 230 attended; hosted Taste of Cecil (beer, wine, cheese, meats, chocolate); tremendous success
- Bassmaster Open – over 300 anglers from across country, Canada, Italy, and Japan
- Tourism group hosted travel writer
- Oct. 7 - Manufacturers' Day – Visit to Air Clear, present certificate
- Prospects – exciting ones; working with Commerce on other attractions as well
- Oct. 24-28 – MD Economic Development Week
 - plan business visits; recognize milestone anniversaries
 - Oct. 25 - North East Library – All-Day Digital Marketing Workshop
 - Grants available for attendees – please spread word
- Salesforce – customer relationship management tool – working on developing for OED use
- Videos – finished 2 days of videoing; editing; need to fill in with B role shooting
- USRC submitted application for Commerce for MD Rural Economic Development Grant
- MD 5 Star at Fair Hill – County hosting chalet meetings – EDC members invited, ticket good all day

An agriculture update was presented by Sandra Edwards, Acting Director, OED

- Agriculture is/historically largest part of Cecil County economy
- Mission: To support and encourage growth and sustainability of ag businesses

- Goals: Unite ag community; Promote/enhance economic vitality of all ag sectors; Advise government on ag interest; Raise public awareness of ag importance; Increase public understanding of modern ag production processes (ag has become high tech)
- We help Cecil's farmers keep farming!
 - Agribusiness Coordinator is first point of contact for ag businesses
 - Expand, Diversity, Sustain, Start-up, Succession, Grants and Financing
 - Upper Shore Micro Agricultural Grants
 - Agricultural Promotion
 - Cecil Grown; Promotion of County
 - Educate the Public
 - Rooted in Our Community; Cecil County Fair, Harvest Dinner, Fresh Food Fest at MD 5 Star; Present to organizations to promote ag and public awareness
- Overview of Ag in Cecil
 - Agriculture and supporting businesses account for 2,365 jobs
 - Total of 533 farms
 - 73,793 total acres of farmland (33% of land base)
 - Total Market Value of Cecil County ag crops was \$136,820,000 in 2017
 - Top crops: Corn, Soybeans, Wheat
- Economic Impact Tax Revenue from 2018 Report: \$17,331,157
- Upward Trend
 - Increase in revenue from farm-related income
 - Increase in market value of products sold
 - Have been on upward trend for past 40 years
- Superlatives
 - #1 Producer: Nursery, Floriculture, Greenhouse, and Sod; hogs and pigs; horses (by value)
 - Winbak Farm:
 - Largest contiguous piece of preserved land in state of MD
 - Largest single-family owned and operated standardbred breeding farm
 - Maryland 5 Star: One of only two 5-Star equestrian events in US; one of 7 in world
 - Warwick Mushroom Farms: Largest single-site mushroom farm in Western Hemisphere
 - SunMed Growers: Largest medical marijuana grower in state of MD
 - Cecil home to only functioning Methane Digester in state with a second in planning stages
- Future of Ag
 - Direct-to-consumer marketing; Value Added Production; Farm Alcohol Production; Agritourism; Hemp; Medical & Recreational Marijuana; Indoor Ag, Urban Ag, Hydroponics, Aquaculture, and Aquaponics
- Cecil Grown online merchandise store

An agriculture update was presented by Bob Miller, Owner, Chesapeake Gold Farms

- Chesapeake Gold Farms – local family farm; 6th generation dairy farm
- Grow soybeans, wheat, hay – sell hay & straw to equine industry in County
- Approx. 4 years ago, challenges competing in ag commodity world
 - Launched value-add side of dairy operation: started having cheese made with their milk; added butter, yogurt, frozen beef; daughter-in-law does fresh cut flowers
- Challenges in Ag:

- Educate non-ag population; programs to help teachers understand ag; educating students re where their food comes from; like to work with elementary schools to give children first hand look at animals, farm life
- High Tech: Activity Monitors (ear tags) in cows; can detect sickness in cows before symptoms appear; when come into heat
- Guidance System to guide planters (# of seeds, spacing, yields)
- Reach out to Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald, Farm Bureau or one of Chesapeake Gold Farms staff
- Grants: Value added side business has grown faster than anticipated; received grant through MARBIDCO to offset costs for walk-in cooler and freezer; grants helped with flower business needs
- Cecil Ag not going to survive on value added – need help with commodity added
- Products can be found in local stores and on farm sales 8-12 Saturday; like to put up retail store
- Advertise on Facebook, website; working on getting signage

Director of Administration Update – Steve Overbay

- Recognize importance of ag in County – steeped in history; hallmark of our economy
- New OED Director, Bill Sorenson, to start Oct. 11
 - Wrapping up duties with MD Department of Commerce as Director of Regional Growth & Retention, Office of Business Development
 - Years of experience in government and private sector
- 5 Star unique opportunity to put Cecil County on world stage
 - Sandy & team working Tourism tent
- FY24 Budget – scheduling kick-off meetings for internal/external agencies
 - Shon McCollum New Director of Finance
- Thank you to BDC – pushing full steam ahead on access points, grant applications, prospecting, etc.
 - Will be tremendous win for County
- State of MD – Leadership changes coming
 - Ensure Cecil County projects don't get sidetracked
- North East River Dredging Update:
 - DMP (Dredge Material Placement) site – certified place to put spoils so can dry and take materials out of rivers and creeks
 - Couple sites in Cecil County currently
 - Working on dredge site for NE River now
 - Have company doing planning/engineering design – updates to be made -- 30-40% complete
 - Schedule:
 - Out for bid – Jan/Feb 2023 timeframe
 - Going to Construction – April 2023
 - Dredging – To begin October 2023
 - Actual Dredging – will remove 50,000 cu. yds. of dredge material
 - Army Corp of Engineers responsibility
 - Army Corp will hire contractors to do dredging; County will have site to accept spoils
 - Shouldn't disrupt boaters; channel size will remain 60 ft. width
 - Should start Oct. 2023; should be complete mid Dec. 2023
 - Progress Meeting on Nov. 15 with Town & Community Stakeholders
 - Resolution introduced at Council meeting last night for \$10,000 DMP Assessment of Elk River
 - Get in cue to receive grant funding

Good of the Cause:

Cecil College Update – Dr. Mary Bolt

- Oct. 14 - Golf Tournament @ Patriots Glen National Course

Cecil County Public Schools – Dr. Jeff Lawson

- School year going well; enrollment up
- Making sure families have a voice in what children are exposed to

Cecil County Public Library – Morgan Miller

- Expanded hours this week in branches
- Crab Crawl held by Foundation; provides funding for summer reading program
- Coming Up:
 - Oct. 11 – Marketing your Business using Canva
 - Free Head Shots offered
 - Monthly Program Series on Non-Profits Resources
 - Find Grants for your Non-Profits

Chamber Update - Debbie Brown

- Manufacturers Day this Friday – blurb/history went out in Newsletter today
- Link to video with David Nevins and Jeff Newman @ MD 5 Star on Chamber Facebook page
- Government Relations Committee meeting every 2 wks.; January every Thursday morning 8:00am
 - Under new executive team; appreciate community support
- Track/monitor bills affecting small businesses in County

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 am.

Next EDC Meeting will be VIRTUAL on November 2, 2022. Details to follow.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant