

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

January 5, 2022

PRESENT

Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Danny DeMarinis (Mitre Corp), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Sandra Edwards (Acting Dir., OED), Bruce England (SWN), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Sharon Kurfuerst (Christiana Care/Union), Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald (Agribusiness Coordinator), Morgan Miller (CCPL), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Steve Overbay (Acting Dir. of Admin.), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Dr. Carl Roberts (BDC), Richard Starr (OED Coordinator), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancenter)

ABSENT

Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Bob Meffley (CC Council)

GUESTS

Debbie Brown (CC Chamber of Commerce), Michele Burch (Realtor), Bill Coutz (CC Council), Donna Culberson (CC Council), Scott Flanigan (CC Director, DPW), Chick Hamm (PNC Bank), Laura Metzler (CCPL), Jeanne Minner (Town of Elkton), Becca Nappi (APG), Sharon Pelham (APGFCU), Brigitte Peters (Commerce), Jack Schammel (TEDCO), Toni Sprenkle (BDC), Maura Van Syckle (SBDC)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m.
- December 1, 2021, meeting minutes approved

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

Regarding two important events:

Carl Roberts:

- In lieu of Annual Cecil Night in Annapolis, Chamber hosting Cecil 2022 tomorrow 8:30am (Virtual)
- All 8 members of Cecil Delegation will be on virtual meeting
- Session starts next Wednesday
- Will address most important issues facing assembly in 2022; legislation that will come before committee
- Will have Q&A time

Debbie Brown:

- Stressed how important relationships are with delegates and senators to Chamber and business community – have been very positive for Cecil County
- Jan 24 - State of the County Address – decision to go Virtual: 8:30-9:30 am
 - County Executive and Council President to give updates

Chairman's Report Continued – Mike Ratchford

- Thank Morgan Miller and her team for hosting December EDC meeting at North East Library
 - Very accommodating to EDC; have wonderful programs to offer there
- First meeting of new year; two topics came to mind: 1) State of Economy in Maryland and Cecil County and 2) Covid
- We are happy to have two experts in both fields with us today as presenters

An Economic Update on the Banking Industry and Forecast for 2022 was presented by Raymond (Chick) Hamm, Executive Vice President, Market Executive for PNC Bank

- Adjusting for Impact of Stimulus - \$4.5 Trillion
 - Contrasting Balance Sheet and P&L Results
 - Importance of Forecasting / Assumptions / Back testing
- Supply Chain Disruption, Labor Force Shortages, and Inflation Pressure
 - Shipping Rates from Asia 9X 2015 Pricing
 - Port Bottlenecks with Wait Times at 11 Days
 - Help Wanted: 80,000 Truck Drivers
 - Commodity Lead Times of 4 to 10 Months
 - UI Forecasted at 3.5% by YE 2022
 - Facing ability to Pass-Thru-Costs
- M&A Activity Driven by Access to Liquidity/Capital and Concerns about Future Taxes
 - PEGs are Active Buyers
 - Sellers Motivated by Prospects for Tax Hikes
 - Results: Newly Leveraged Entities / Less Margin for Error
- Forecast: Continued Industry Pressure
 - 1966: 24,000 Commercial Banks / Today: 4,951
 - Continued Consolidation Among Smaller Institutions
 - Balance of Large and Small is Needed for Economic Health
- LIBOR Subset
 - Deadline Extended from YE to June 2023 / SOFR / BSBY
- PNC employees not fully back in the office, still working virtually – difficult on relationship with coworkers
- People can feel good about safe harbor of repositories in this country
- Increasing costs, supply chain issues, etc. – think we will see this continue for a while
- Seeing companies rethink amount of office space needed to operate with boom in remote work locations and virtual meetings
- Working from home has been very successful for both employers and employees
- Community Banks provide personal touch/service for small businesses but can't offer some services large banks can

A COVID Update and Hospital Status/Response was reported on by Sharon Kurfuerst, System Chief Operating Officer and President ChristianaCare, Union Hospital

- Seeing significant uptick in Covid positive tests and patients
- Today, Union Hospital's number is 134 which is 125% of capacity; have been running at that level for solid five weeks
- 40% of Union Hospital's patients today are Covid positive patients – higher % than at height of pandemic or 15 months ago
- Every unit open, every bed possible staffed
- Current variants are generally milder in vaccinated and generally healthy population; equally severe in unvaccinated (represents majority of ICU and super sick – immunocompromised or underlying health conditions)
- Omicron is not less severe than Delta if in high-risk category or unvaccinated
- Experiencing bed shortages – patients waiting in ED for beds
- Experiencing workforce shortages: doctors, nurses, support care delivery through respiratory

therapists, imaging x-ray techs, lab, and pharmacy staff

- Having to use agency staff – 3-4 times the cost
- Have had supply chain issues – find alternate suppliers for medical supplies
- National Guard deployed in areas of country to lessen burden on emergency departments (ED)
- Seeing 47% Covid positivity rate in ChristianaCare staff = approx. 160 caregivers/day with only 70 caregivers/day returning at a time
- Can now return from Covid protocol in 5 days with negative test – most people do not test negative on day 5, still takes about 10 days
- Have great partnership with Dept. of Public Health – lots of sharing data, information, resources
- Not Covid naive any longer, just resource stretched
- Seeing uptick in mental health concerns/crises – most dramatic in young adult and adolescent populations
- Challenge finding inpatient mental health beds – especially if Covid positive
- Some patients are waiting in ED for 72 hrs. to be discharged to an inpatient mental health facility including substance use disorders
- Substance abuse on rise – seeing alcohol withdrawals or overdoses (fentanyl overdose a national crisis)
- Challenges accessing mental health care in the community
- Expect to hit peak of resurgence Jan 14-21, 2022; hope to be on downside end of January
- ChristianaCare has suspended all non-emergent procedures and surgeries till end of January
- **Best Advice: If experiencing Upper Respiratory Symptoms without respiratory distress – do symptom management; BUT watch closely. If symptoms worsen, especially in people with underlying conditions, seek help immediately.**
- **Best Defense: Get Vaccinated, Get Vaccine Booster, Wear a Mask, Stay Out of Large Crowds, Wash Hands Frequently, Do Diligence in Staying Safe**
- **Will update community as updates become available**

Administration Update – Steve Overbay

- Acknowledge Councilwoman Culberson and Councilman Coutz – thankful for their support of economic development initiatives brought in front of Council
- 1st Winter Snow Event – Thank DPW for job well done keeping business community flowing
- Administrative note – CARES spending finalized as of December 31, 2021
- FY23 Budget process underway (including OED)
- American Rescue Plan Act Fund underway as to how funds will be spent - Infrastructure
- Thank you to OED team for their efforts while I am on loan
- Working with BDC potential tenants on site work
 - Want to market properties to show Cecil rich area to fill manufacturing and logistics jobs for potential employers

Acting Director's Report – Economic Development Update - Sandra Edwards

- Tourism's Winter Lights Cecil Nights kicks off Friday, January 7th – all 8 towns participating
 - Shops and restaurants open – wear your masks and enjoy
- Upper Shore Micro Ag Grants – second year to receive funding
 - County matching funding – will receive MARBIDCO funding as well for certain projects
 - Deadline February 18th
- March 5 – 2nd Annual Rooted in Our Community – “Investing in Agriculture” – To be Virtual
- Commercial Land/Property being bought up

- Projects moving along: Great Wolf Lodge, Trammel Crow's Elkton Commerce Center, Free State Business Park, I-95 Interchange, Belle Hill Rd and Muddy Lane
- MEDA Winter Conference in Annapolis on Thursday, Jan. 13th
- Working on adding new EDC members by Feb-Mar; then working on subcommittees
- Coordinating a kick-off meeting for Economic Impact Study for events in Cecil County

Good of the Cause:

Council Update – Bill Coutz

- First Legislative and Work Session of new year
 - Both USRC and MARBIDCO grants were approved for OED – were very successful in FY21; glad to see return in FY22
- Last quarter's projections met and exceeded forecast – County looks strong from revenue standpoint currently; expenditures under control

College Update – Dr. Mary Bolt

- New Workforce Programs including Pest Management
- Moving forward with Marine Trades Technician
- Continuing CDL Training

CCPL Update – Morgan Miller

- In partnership with Health Dept as supplier of Covid test kits throughout the County at Library branches
 - Received 600 kits last Tuesday evening, all gone by 11am on Wednesday

TEDCO Update – Jack Schammel

- Working with two technology startups in County: Benson Outfitters and Benson Restaurants
 - Both have developed apps for new applications within their industries
 - TEDCO supporting them with projects, lining them up to become eligible for funding, connecting with partners throughout ecosystem to increase chances of success

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 am.

Next EDC Meeting will be VIRTUAL on February 2, 2022, at 8:00 am. Details to follow.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant