

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

February 1, 2023

PRESENT

Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), Danny DeMarinis (Mitre Corp), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Sandra Edwards (OED Mgr.), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald (OED Agribusiness Coordinator), Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Kimberly Justus (SWN), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Morgan Miller (CCPL), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Dr. Carl Roberts (BDC), Bill Sorenson (OED Director), Richard Starr (OED Coordinator), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancenter)

ABSENT

JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Jeff Emmons (Delmarva Power), Ed Jones (Northrop Grumman), Bob Meffley (CC Council)

GUESTS

Michele Burch (Realtor), Donna Culberson (CC Council), Christie Griest (Tourism), Laura Hannan (FHNC), Amy Marston (Christiana Care/Union), Megan McRay (CC Chamber of Commerce), John Ness (WCHC), Jen Peterson (BDC), Dan Schneckenburger (Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board), Jeff Sellers (SB Realty), Alan Sexton (SWN), Toni Sprenkle (BDC), Andrea Vuncannon (APGFCU), Maura Van Syckle (SBDC), Karen Zuccardi (TEDCO)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m.
- January 4, 2023, meeting minutes approved

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

- Welcome Megan McRay, new Executive Director, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
- State of County breakfast very successful – good to see everyone in person, great to hear updates from County Executive and Bill Sorenson
- First month of MD General Assy concluded – over 1,000 bills presented
 - Hope to have future report from Government Relations Committee

Director's Report – Update on Economic Development – OED Staff

Economic Development Manager Update – Sandra Edwards

- Video for Business Attraction purposes-- revisions made to first cut; planning series of 3 video with release this spring
- Grants – Digital Marketing Workshop in October
 - Awarded 14 grants; have <\$3,000 funding remaining; looking at future social media workshops
- Legislation re Enterprise Zone
 - Restrictions on land to determine eligibility – over 50% of Cecil land not eligible – Cecil County will be opposing bill
- Salesforce CRM Platform – many accounts entered, working on entering projects and contacts; generate reports
- Bill Sorenson presented at State of County – even with recession looming, things still looking good in Cecil County

Sandy Maruchi-Turner, Tourism Manager Update:

- Winter Lights Cecil Nights half over – clearly people looking for things to do in winter
 - February: Cecilton Life on the Chesapeake; Elkton's Soup There It Is Contest, Snow Much fun, carriage rides, Sip N Stroll, scavenger hunts, wagon rides, fire pit nights, night hike, geo cashing, open house Fairwinds Farm
- Spring ad planning
- Show month – booth at Travel & Adventure Show in DC, MD Office of Tourism booth at Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg

Richard Starr, Economic Development Coordinator Update:

- December activity slow but has picked up – talking to couple of employers coming to County
- New Utility Workers Training School coming to Cecil Co – offering CDL, basic OSHA training class, aerial electrical connections, high voltage, gas lines, etc.
 - Closest school in Georgia; big deal for MD and region
 - Hoping to open 3Q23
 - AUI Power training center remains in place for AUI employees; new school for non-AUI employees

Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald, Agribusiness Coordinator Update:

- Lots of prospect activity
- Closed Upper Shore Ag grants yesterday; 21 applications; highly competitive grant; program won award at MACo
 - Excited to house program in conjunction with USRC
- Rooted in Our Community: Feeding a Growing Population in a Global Food System – Sat, Mar 4th at Cecil College, 9:00am start -- FREE event

A Workforce Update was presented by Kimberly Justus, Executive Director, Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN)

- CDL program at Cecil College amazing – SWN funds training for individuals
- Cecil County Employment by Industry as of 4Q2020
 - Trades, Transportation and Utilities largest sector; biggest industry impacting Cecil
 - Education & Health Services and Manufacturing – next largest
 - Construction and Professional & Business Services at 4%
 - Leisure & Hospitality at 11%; Local Government at 13%
 - 5 regions with Stars – priority industries for funding; large field and room to grow for individuals entering industries
- Unemployment as of 11/2022
 - MD 3.5%; Cecil County 3.6%; historically low unemployment rates
 - Delaware State 4.1%; New Castle County 3.9%
- Unemployment Rate
 - 2013-2020 slowly decreasing unemployment rate; then major spike due to COVID – trending down since
 - Cecil County closely in line with state of MD
- Employment Trends as of 2Q2022
 - Total employment for Cecil County 37,032 based on 4Q moving average
 - Overall declined 1.8% in region over year; Cecil had decline in 2021
- Wage Trends as of 2Q2022
 - Average wage in Cecil County \$53,991

- Annual wages increased by 9.1% in region; Cecil's wages gone up more than US and state averages
- Jobs & Candidates Available as of 1/29/2023
 - 179 openings in Cecil County; 8,000 individuals looking for work
- Cecil County Industry
 - Retail trade, public administration, finance and insurance, real estate rental and leasing growing
 - Magazine, newspaper, utilities dropped slightly
 - Overall industries growing
- Gross Domestic Product
 - In 2021, nominal GDP contracted 0.1%; follows growth of 1.0% in 2020
 - Total GDP in Cecil County \$4,198,675,000
 - Sectors that make up GDP: manufacturing, health care and social assistance, public administration, transportation & warehousing, retail trade are tops
- Impacts on Workforce Attraction
 - Increased savings during pandemic due to enhanced unemployment, stimulus checks, delayed student loan payments
 - Early retirements
 - Lack of access to Childcare – availability, reliability, and cost
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Entry Level Wage Increases – Entry Level Warehouse hiring at \$18/hr. w/some incentives going up to \$22/hr.
 - Inflation – Annual rate $\approx$ 7% dwindling savings
- SWN publishes HOT JOBS every Thursday – plenty of jobs available
 - Contact Kim if interested in receiving lists; businesses can be included in listing
- Get Connected – Increase employee attraction (Virtual)

Feb/Apr	Virtual
March 4	Summer Employment Job Fair, 9am-12pm; SWN – Cecil County Hire youth for summer
March 23	Summer Employment Job Fair, 2:30pm-5:30pm; SWN-Harford County
May 11	Cecil County Job Fair, 12-4pm; Singerly Fire Hill
Sept 28	Harford County Job Fair, 12-4pm; APGFCU Arena @ HCC
- Training funding is available for incumbent workers for businesses

Education Update – Dr. Jeffrey Lawson

- Growth in education down -1.9% over past 5 yrs.
- First roll out of state aid for the blueprint
 - Significant increase in state funding \$15M, earmarked for specific area
 - \$3.3M for Pre-K; Cost per pupil in public school system \$14K-\$16K/year
 - Spending to be determined by State
- Debates over appropriateness of books

Cecil College Update – Dr. Mary Bolt

- Spring Enrollment up 2%
- Advanced Trades Education Scholarship – geared to people having difficulties getting into trades (homelessness, etc.)
 - Cecil College Foundation has funding to help with transportation, child care, clothing
- Friday – presenting to Eastern Shore Delegation

Cecil County Public Library – Morgan Miller

- Launching new program in partnership with MD Legal Aid Bureau – Lawyer in the Library
 - Set up appointments for free legal advice (landlord tenant, family law, foreclosure/bankruptcy)
 - Morgan looking into small business access for same program
- Strategic Planning – create next 3 years of teaching plan
 - Survey sent out; overwhelmed with responses
 - In person sessions – community & business leaders @ NE Library (Feb)

Cecil County Chamber Update – Megan McRay

- Continuing to meet with folks 1-on-1 – see how Chamber can continue to partner
- Bringing awareness to County as to what's happening in different industries
- Contact Megan if have events, etc. she should attend

Small Business Update – Mike Travers

- Thank Richard/OED for reaching out to B&B Seafood – great feedback on quick response and assistance

Legislative Update – Dr. Carl Roberts

- Budget -- Important to properly fund public institutions (library, College, public school, Sheriff's office)
- Governor's "no one left behind" – public institutions critically important to ensuring this

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 am.

Next EDC Meeting will be on March 1, 2023, at 8:00 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant