

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

April 2, 2025

PRESENT

Ariel Balog (Ag Industry Coordinator), Mary Bolt (Cecil College), Danny DeMarinis (NEMD URP), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Amy DiPietro (MRA), Sandra Edwards (OED Director), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Jake Herman (OED), Kimberly Justus (SWN), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Arsalan Sheikh (rep. Christiana-Union)

ABSENT

Kristina Brown (Delmarva Power), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Ed Jones (Northrop Grumman), Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Mgr.), Dr. Carl Roberts (BDC), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancenter)

GUESTS

Randy Baynes (DPL), Stacey Brown (SWN), Alicia Calhoun (Elkton Alliance), Scott Flanigan (CC DPW), Christie Griest (Tourism), Matt Herman (Citizen), John Ness (WCHC), Susan O'Neill (USRC), Jen Peterson (BDC), Kim Ray (Tourism), Dan Schneckenburger (CC Director of Admin.), Toni Sprenkle (BDC), Gary Stewart, Jr. (Stewart Properties), Clyde Van Dyke (CC P&R), Maura Van Syckle (SBDC), Jessica Worley (CC Chamber of Commerce)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:00am
- March 2025 meeting minutes approved

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

- County Executive presented his budget yesterday
- Week to go in MD legislative session – work to be done

Director's Report – Sandra Edwards

- Staffing: Jake Herman, new Business Development Specialist

Introduction – Jake Herman

- Third week with OED
- Grew up in Hershey, PA; attended Wilmington University
- Spent 1-1/2 yrs interning for USRC
- Excited for new opportunity with OED

Director's Report (Continued) – Sandra Edwards

- Deputy Director, Rebecca Clark, starts on April 21, previously Queen Anne's County OED
- Enterprise Zone – confident program will remain intact
- Interviews with EDC Members – **Copy of Summary attached**
- Tourism:
 - Final reports from towns for Winter Lights Cecil Nights
 - Working on spring & summer marketing
 - Participated in Philadelphia, PA bus show followed by Travel & Adventure Expo in DC
 - Will be at Delmarva Sports Network Outdoor Expo in Harrington, DE later this month
- OED's budget being presented to Council on April 8, 4:30-6:30pm

- Governor and his cabinet here in Cecil couple weeks ago – toured Bainbridge, Rising Sun, and cabinet toured other locations around County – Cecil showed very well

Administration Update – Dan Schneckenburger

- County Executive announced at budget presentation that EZs restored but not definitized until General Assembly passes reconciled budget
 - Based on intelligence and proposed tax increases, we feel confident but need to wait for SINE DIE --
 - Will then send out press release to inform public
- Good to see OED fully staffed
- Want to get moving on strategic plan

An update on Principio Business Park was presented by Gary Stewart, Jr., President, Stewart Properties

- Cecil County special place for us
- Real estate group, building materials group, 3rd generation family looking to pass torch to 4th generation

Principio Business Park Phase I

- Rt. 40 and I-95 – Interchange project currently underway
- Several large tenants – Amazon, Restoration Hardware, Lidl, Medline, General Electric, Smithfield
- Next 5-10 years, focus will be Principio Phase II – will take place between CSX line and I-95
- Leverage interchange – truck traffic on/off I-95 and not utilizing County roads
- Current specs: 7.5MSF Built/Leased
- No Current Vacancy
- Current Assessed Value of Buildings \$595M, \$656 with Land

- 2024 Total Taxes Collected: \$8.4M; \$60.5M Cumulative
- 2024 Real Property: \$4.3M; \$1.3M Cumulative
- 2024 Personal Property: \$1.3M; \$12.8M Cumulative
- 2024 Income Taxes: \$2.8M; \$16.6M Cumulative

- Park employs ,200
- Avg. distribution salary \$62,656 (Over \$30/hr)
- Distribution salaries have increased 38% in past 10 yrs.
- Distribution salary growth 16% more than private jobs in Cecil Co.
- Current distribution avg. salary 14% higher than all private jobs in Cecil Co; 3.2% higher than avg. salary of all jobs in County (including Govt & private)

Principio Business Park 3-5 Year Plan

- Finish Phase I: 150,000 SF, 300,000 SF and (3) 100,000 SF buildings starting 2026
- Interchange Completion 2026/2027
- Belvidere Road Realignment Project 2027
- Belvidere Road Enhancement Project
- Begin Infrastructure and Entrance to Principio Phase II 2028
- Begin 1st Building, Negotiations ongoing with 1st client 2030 occupancy

Principio Business Park Challenges

- Desire to attract manufacturing, R&D and Data Center activity

- Most significant non-Government current limitations:
 - Power to attract large power consuming manufacturing and data
 - Water and Natural Gas to attract food and beverage, one of largest growing manufacturing sectors in Mid Atlantic market. (Last 3 projects were on average 1 MGPD)
 - Labor pool for manufacturing jobs. While labor for distribution has been robust, unsure labor county could accommodate a 500-800 size manufacturing client
- Stewart Properties wants to be good partner with the County as well as companies that do business with Cecil County
- Considered great corporate citizen in County
- Look forward to more opportunities for more manufacturing, in turn, more opportunities for the County

Others:

Cecil College – Dr. Mary Bolt

- Mid semester; graduation in May
- Summer Camps available
- Will be starting second utility training soon with Delmarva Power which pays for tuition and provides stipend

Cecil Chamber/GRC – Jessica Worley

- April 7 - New CEO, Jack Schammel starts; meet him at Member Appreciation Picnic on April 11th
- April 15 – Legislative Wrap-up, Cecil College

Agriculture Update – Ariel Balog

- Ag Education Days - 3–day-event end of April; gives every 7th grader in Cecil County public schools chance to learn about agriculture
 - Looking for volunteers and sponsors

Workforce Update – Kim Justus, SWN

- May 15 – Cecil County Job Fair
 - Employers interested in hiring should contact SWN to get a table
 - Graduating seniors from CCPS will be bused to job fair

Christiana Care – Dr. Arsalan Sheikh

- Dr. Sheikh has stepped down as campus president for Union Hospital – has gone back to original position, Chief Medical Officer
- Joan Pirrung, who was Chief Nursing Officer, will be Interim Campus President
- Hospital seeing surge of respiratory illnesses, flu virus in December-February; also bit more Covid

REMINDER: May 7, 2025, EDC Meeting will be VIRTUAL

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant