

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY

WORK SESSION MINUTES

January 13, 2026

OPEN SESSION – Elk Room

4:30 P.M.

NOTE: The recording and transcription of this meeting are available on the County website at www.cecilcountymd.gov

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, Rebecca Hamilton, Al Miller, Donna Culberson and Dawn Branch; Council Manager L. Michelle Henson; Council Assistant Christine Palmer; members of the Administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

President Miller called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and announced that there were five Council Members present which constitute a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Vice President Meffley, seconded by Councilwoman Branch, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of January 6, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

Strategic Plan Update – Director of Economic Development, Sandra Edwards

Director of Economic Development Sandra Edwards provided an overview of the Departments of Economic Development (OED) and Tourism via Power Point Presentation, a copy of which was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Director Edwards stated that OED is now fully staffed, having recently filled the position of Agribusiness Development Coordinator.

President Miller commended OED for their efforts in promoting local products.

President Miller expressed concerns that citing solar arrays on agricultural land does not comply with OED's goal of maximizing property through its highest and best use. Director Edwards concurred with President Miller's statement.

Director Edwards displayed OED's updated logo. Council members expressed support for the updated logo.

Director Edwards stated OED's commitment to small and large businesses, adding that retention is as important as recruiting. She noted that Cecil County's marketing area includes Baltimore and Philadelphia markets, adding that the largest amount of available acreage along the I-95 corridor lies within Cecil County. She noted that Cecil County is connected to regional and global markets via highways, rail, airports and shipping ports.

Councilwoman Hamilton noted that commuters traveling to Cecil County from Wilmington experience less traffic congestion than those travelling in the opposite direction.

Director Edwards noted that Maryland ranks among the states with the highest concentration of college degree holders.

Councilwoman Culberson noted that Cecil County needs additional affordable housing.

Director Edwards provided an overview of Cecil County's diverse industry base, noting that manufacturing employs the largest number of workers in the county. Councilwoman Hamilton queried if the data includes workers from outside of the county. Director Edwards answered in the affirmative.

Director Edwards noted the positive financial impact of the county's larger employers, including WL Gore, Terumo, Great Wolf Lodge and Penn National Casino. President Miller noted that WL

Gore is an important community partner, providing over 11,400 hours of paid leave for employees to volunteer with local non-profit organizations.

Director Edwards stated that Bainbridge Phase I has a tenant and recruitment for additional tenants is ongoing. Councilwoman Hamilton noted the potential location of a data center within Bainbridge and expressed concerns regarding the amount of energy required by this type of facility. She requested a future discussion regarding the impacts of data centers on infrastructure.

Councilwoman Culberson expressed concerns regarding truck traffic leaving logistics centers and using residential roads. She requested updated regulations to address the vehicles. Director of Finance Raymond Hamm stated that Administration is addressing the issue of truck traffic on residential roads. He stated that Director of Administration Schneckenburger was currently meeting with representatives of a logistics center involved in recent truck traffic issues. Councilwoman Branch noted that her district includes an area where large trucks must back up from a low overpass.

Vice President Meffley queried if OED staff included a recruiter position. Director Edwards stated that all OED staff members serve as recruiters for Cecil County.

Director Edwards stated that a “meet and greet” community event for Agribusiness Development Coordinator Malik Grace will be held on January 27th from 9:30 am to 11:00 am at the North East Public Library. Director Edwards stated Coordinator Grace’s position will include assisting the agriculture community with permitting, expansion or other issues farmers may face.

Director Edwards, referring to the Tourism Department, noted that Tourism Manager Sandy Turner has served the County for approximately 28 years. She stated that Tourism generated over \$350 million in visitor spending in 2024 and generated over \$44 million in tax revenue.

Discussion ensued regarding the future of the Maryland Five Star event. Vice President Meffley expressed his desire for increased marketing of the event.

Director Edwards stated that OED participated in a marketing assessment (assessment) to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for OED. She stated that the assessment fills the interim prior to the completion of the five-year strategic plan (the Plan).

Director Edwards stated that in November 2025, OED submitted a Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop the Plan, stating that proposals are due in January 2026. She stated that OED received 16 letters of intent to date. Director Edwards stated that the Plan is scheduled for completion in December 2026.

Councilwoman Culberson queried OED’s marketing process. Director Edwards stated OED produces a newsletter and will continue the message of business support.

Vice President Meffley queried if OED maintains a database of available buildings, etc. Director Edwards answered in the affirmative.

Vice President Meffley queried if OED maintains a database of employees. Director Edwards answered in the negative, stated that business queries for employees are directed to the Susquehanna Workforce Network. She noted that the Office of Permits and Inspections would likely maintain a database of trade-related employee resources.

President Miller, referring to the assessment’s indication that Cecil is a good location for data centers, countered that required infrastructure is not in place to support a data center.

President Miller noted that the permitting process for other jurisdictions is more efficient than Cecil County.

Vice President Meffley queried the timeframe for completion of the Plan. Director Edwards stated the Plan should be completed by December 2026.

Vice President Meffley stated that improved efficiency in permitting and inspection will have a direct, positive impact on economic development.

Director Edwards noted that Cecil County's location is considered part of the Philadelphia Metropolitan region, Central Maryland as well as the Eastern Shore. She stated these designations can present marketing challenges. Councilwoman Culberson suggested that Cecil County be marketed as uniquely Cecil County. Director Edwards stated that identification with other areas can provide marketing opportunities to benefit an entire region.

Director Edwards stated she meets with municipal administrations on a regular basis, stating her goal of towns working together for the entire county vs. competing with one another.

Discussion ensued regarding Council's goals of marketing Cecil County's amenities, relatively short commutes to metropolitan areas, and building a business-friendly reputation.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Henson stated the report was included in Council's meeting packet. Council Manager Henson advised Council that Deputy Finance Director Andrew Ondish provided the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Council's review prior to the January 20, 2026 Work Session.

Council Member Items

Councilwoman Hamilton stated she will attend Cecil Night in Annapolis on January 15th, adding that she looks forward to hearing from Legislators.

President Miller stated the Cecil County Soil Conservation Banquet is scheduled for Friday, January 16th.

Adjournment

President Miller requested a motion to adjourn the Work Session.

Councilwoman Branch made motion to adjourn the Work Session, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson.

President Miller adjourned the work session at 5:40 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 4:30 pm in the Elk Room of the County Administrative Building. The session will be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage at www.cecilcountymd.gov

Approved:



L. Michelle Henson
Council Manager


Al Miller, Council President