

CECIL COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

April 1, 2026

Location: CCST

Attendance

Present:

Mary Bolt (Cecil College), Chris Brown (CSCD), Rebecca Clark (OED), Alice Crothers (Long Green Farms), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Danny DeMarinis (NEMD-URP), Amy DiPietro (MRA), Sandra Edwards (OED), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Woody Jackson (Retired), Kimberly Justus (SWN), Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Jeff Martindale (City of Newark), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism), Robert Palsgrove (Retired), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Associates), Deirdre Smith (Artesian Water), Rachel Wright (CCPL)

Absent:

Robert Alt, Kelly Benson, Kevin Brown, Kristina Brown, Michael Cooper, Malik Grace, Kenneth Hamilton, Rebecca Hamilton, Jake Herman, Ed Jones, Michelle Linkey, Travis Marion, Joan Pirrung, Brooke Somers, Dr. Carl Roberts, Rich Taylor, Mike Travers

Guests:

Marie Berg, Erica Berge, Stacey Brown, Scott Flanigan, David Foye, Laura Hannan, Shawn Johnson, John Ness, Dr. Nicole Parr, Jen Peterson, Jack Schammel, Dan Schneckenburger, Jeff Sellers, Toni Sprenkle, Maura Van Syckle

Call to Order & Approval of Minutes

Chairman Mike Ratchford called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

The March 2026 meeting minutes were approved.

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

- Thank Dr. Lawson and CCST for hosting EDC
 - Final two weeks of legislative session
 - No significant tax increases expected in 2027
 - MD Chamber and Cecil Chamber making MD more competitive
-

Director's Report – Sandra Edwards

- Economic Development Strategic Plan
 - Jon Stover and Associates selected as consultant
 - Kickoff meeting tomorrow
 - Agriculture Initiatives
 - Micro Ag Grants: 22 applications received, 13 projects approved (\$74,666 available)
 - Events & Programming
 - MD 5 Star paused for 2026
 - May 24-25: Fair Hill Races will run Memorial Day weekend
 - April 26-28: MEDA Annual Conference
 - Cecil Tech Connect Mixer April 23 @ Bohemia Manor Farms
 - Mark Mortenson of Clene Nanomedicine to be speaker
 - May 3-6: SelectUSA Investment Summit
 - Joining MD Dept of Commerce, GBC, and 8 other counties exhibiting
 - Highest profile event in the US
 - May 7: Invest in Baltimore Region (SelectUSA spinoff)
 - May 4-8: National Small Business Week
 - May 19: Bainbridge Presentation & Tour for ED Leaders & Planning Directors
 - Maryland 250 Celebration
 - Received \$15,000 for promotion plus two projects: interactive history wall at FHNC and collection of highlights stories during 1860s-1960s
 - March 28: Kickoff Event held at The Wellwood
 - Community Engagement
 - May 6: 2026 Legislative Session Wrap-Up scheduled for EDC meeting
-

Guest Presentation

Student Achievement and the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program –
Dr. Jeffrey Lawson, Superintendent, Cecil County Public Schools (CCPS).

State testing is administered in Grades 3-10 in the Areas of English/Language Arts and Math.

Key Takeaways:

Impacting Factors on Student Achievement:

- Student Demographics – schools differ
 - Main difference is Children's backgrounds
- Literacy vs. Mathematics
 - You cannot pass math without literacy skills
- MD College and Career Readiness Standards
- County Economic Implications
 - Can tell success of 4-year-olds by mother's education
 - Constituents' education level major driver in economic development

Challenges:

- Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards – Maryland's version of Common Core Standards – changed assessments even against advice of educators
 - Assessments are very difficult – Many adults could not pass
 - Child can NEVER get full credit on assessments if can't read well or express in writing
- Why are some students successful and some are not – even in same classroom
- Cecil ranked 18th in MD for residents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2024 data)
- Public schools compared to Charter and Private schools – do not compare

Cecil County Data – Per Local Education Agency (LEA) rank in State:

- English / Language Arts – 2024 Rank 16th, 2025 Rank 15th
- Math – 2024 and 2025 Rank 17th

Strengths:

- Amazing things happening in Cecil schools every day
- Assessments do not always give true picture of students

- Students using Chromebooks in classrooms

Additional Insights:

- CCPS emblem designed by North East High School student in 2018 when CCPS rebranded

Attendees were given a Chromebook uploaded with questions from the 5th Grade math test.

A tour of CCST was held after the meeting.

Partner Updates

Cecil County Public Library – Rachel Wright

- Moving forward with rendering for Elkton branch
- May 17: Friends Foundation hosting Cake Social

Fair Hill Nature Center – Laura Hannan

- April 25: Frog Frenzy
- Planning stage of building nature-based placement at Fair Hill

Cecil College – Dr. Mary Bolt

- Check calendar for student events, art exhibits, music, visual communications
- Working on master plan required by COMAR every 10 yrs.
- Gala (major fundraiser) in a few weeks

Susquehanna Workforce Network – Kim Justus

- Awarded EARN grant from State for Workforce Development in IT-related industry
- May 14: Cecil County Job Fair

Cecil Soil Conservation District – Chris Brown

- Teaching students about soil conservation
 - Taking students to Long Green Farms to see agriculture in person
 - April 28–30: Agricultural Education Days at Fair Hill
-

Next Meeting

May 6, 2026 (Virtual) – 8:00 AM

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Springel

Administrative Budget Assistant