

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

March 6, 2019

PRESENT

Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Sandra Edwards (CC OED Manager), Bruce England (SWN), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Bob Meffley (CC Council), Chris Moyer (CC OED Director), Maureen O'Shea (CC Agribusiness Coordinator), Robert Palsgrove (WSFS), Dr. Carl Roberts (Roberts Consulting), Richard Starr (CC OED Coordinator), Dr. Rich Szumel (Union Hospital), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancer)

ABSENT

Linda Burris (Delmarva Power), Danny DeMarinis (URP), Paula Gilley (Citizen), Michael Lara (Northrop Grumman), Grove Miller (Citizen), Morgan Miller (CCPL), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Rupert Rossetti (Citizen)

GUESTS

Debbie Brown (CC Chamber of Commerce), Bill Coutz (CC Council), Miles Dean (Cecil College), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Aaron Eastern (OED Intern), Scott Flanigan (CC DPW), Tom Lofland (Cecil College), Jen Lyall (CC Public Information Officer), Nicole Parr (for Dr. Jeffrey Lawson, CCPS), Sharon Pelham (APGFCU), Brigitte Peters (MD Dept. of Commerce), Dan Schneckenburger (Apex Piping), Alan Sexton (SWN), David Strouss (McCrone), Scott Sturgill (Cecil Bank), Katie Tabeling (Cecil Whig)

Call to Order & Welcome – Bob Palsgrove for Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:03 a.m.
- Introductions made; February 6, 2019 meeting minutes approved

Director's Report – Chris Moyer

- Workforce #1 focus for businesses looking to locate here
- Minimum Wage bill
 - Very concerned what it will do to Cecil County – lose our competitive edge with Delaware
 - Delaware minimum wage under \$10/hr; Maryland minimum wage will be at \$15/hr
 - Some people making minimum wage will be out of a job; some will be making more
 - Senate bill different from House bill
- Northrop Grumman bringing jobs to Cecil Co. – MD Dept. of Commerce did heavy lifting
 - Will be hiring for high paying tech & manufacturing jobs
 - Been doing business in County for 71 years

Legislative Update – Carl Roberts

- Co. Executive McCarthy introduced a resolution that would establish budget stabilization reserve
 - To be maintained at 1 percent of actual general fund revenues
 - Would be used for unexpected fluctuations in revenues and expenditures
 - Proposal includes raising level of “rainy day” fund from 7.5 to 10 percent of current budget
 - Resolution requires 2/3 Council vote
 - Important for County's bond rating

A Panel Discussion was held regarding manufacturing workforce in Cecil County. Businesses included Mark Mortenson, Clene NanoMedicine, Trey Muller-Thym, Thymly Products, and Alan Sexton, Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN). Bruce England (SWN) narrated.

Manufacturing accounts for 27% of workforce in Cecil County. There are 81 businesses classified as manufacturers in Cecil County employing 4,500 workers. Manufacturing has the highest average weekly wage among all industries in Cecil County.

A series of questions were asked of each panel member:

1. Please introduce yourself, describe your company and what you do there.

Mark Mortenson is Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Clene NanoMedicine. Clene is on cutting edge of approaching a cure for three different diseases using metallic nanocrystals in a drug they have manufactured. FDA has approved Phase II trials. Trey Muller-Thym is President of Thymly Products. Thymly produces grain-based foods for stores and restaurants.

Alan Sexton is Business Services Representative for Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN). SWN works with individuals and businesses in Cecil and Harford Counties to address workforce development programs and services.
2. What are the critical occupational categories and key hard and soft skills your company looks for when attracting employees for entry and advanced level positions?

Hard Skills – range from high school degree to College degrees as required by individual manufacturers. Range from fabricators, machinists, manufacturing people, lab techs, chemists, etc. Have to follow Policies and Procedures. Sometimes just finding right person to train.

Soft Skills – show up for work, follow directions, good work ethics
3. What are the top workforce recruitment and retention challenges of your industry? How have your recruitment and retention strategies changed as the labor market has tightened in recent years?

Challenges range from prospective employees not wanting to relocate to County due to lack of amenities for millennials, lack of transportation, failure to pass background checks, failure to pass drug screening, and lack of awareness of manufacturing industry in County. Lack of Soft Skills - See problems in every age group. Lack of social skills. Employee expectations, both monetary and job promotion, are not reality. Work ethics -- Do not show up on time for work, do not show up at all for work. Expectations for high pay with no experience and for promotion without putting time in business, lack of understanding of finances, attitude, etc.

Answers varied from hiring summer interns (internships have proven very valuable), utilizing resources from Cecil College, SWN, recruiting services (Indeed), to placing ads on Craigslist.

4. Can you share with us the anticipated impact of automation and technology on your current and future workforce?
Thymly looking for automation (robots) due to labor prices going up (minimum wage bill). Robots show up for work.
Clene looking to add more automation in certain processes but still need humans to manage manufacturing processes.

5. Are there other industry, economic and/or customer trends that will impact the growth of your industry and workforce composition?
Minimum \$15/hr can affect hiring employees.
Need more live/play attractions in County to attract millennials.

6. What can the education and workforce system do to better prepare jobseekers and residents to be employed in your industry and to help your company grow?
Teach reality -- what working world is all about.
Teach soft skills – expectations of employees by employers.
Teach basic finances.

7. Give us some insights on upcoming changes for your business.
Thymly - Putting more automation in place due to labor prices escalating.
Clene – Will need many people; will be hiring. Regulatory pricing a challenge. At manufacturing level, will be people intensive even with implementing more automation.

Subcommittee Reports:

Finance – Bob Palsgrove

- No loan applications at this time.

Sandra Edwards

- Introduced Aaron Easter (intern)
 - Aaron going on site visits to businesses; working on messaging and social media.

The report will be available via OED website.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Our next EDC meeting will be on April 3, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at Cecil College, Room TC208.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant