

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

December 7, 2022

PRESENT

Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Danny DeMarinis (Mitre Corp), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Sandra Edwards (OED Mgr.), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Kimberly Justus (SWN), Dr. Joe Buckley for Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Morgan Miller (CCPL), Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald (OED Agribusiness Coordinator), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Matt Roath (Mayor, Perryville), Bill Sorenson (OED Director), Richard Starr (OED Coordinator), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancer)

ABSENT

Jeff Emmons (Delmarva Power), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Ed Jones (Northrop Grumman), Sharon Kurfuerst (Christiana Care/Union), Bob Meffley (CC Council), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Dr. Carl Roberts (BDC)

GUESTS

Debbie Brown (CC Chamber of Commerce), Michele Burch (EXIT Realty), Scott Flanigan (CC DPW), Lauren Levy (Cecil County Health Officer), Brigitte Peters (Commerce), Jen Peterson (BDC), Jeff Sellers (SB Realty), Alan Sexton (SWN), Toni Sprenkle (BDC), Karen Zuccardi (TEDCO)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:24 a.m.

A Winter Health Update for Cecil County was presented by Lauren Levy, JD, MPH, Health Officer, Cecil County Health Dept.

- *A lot of respiratory illness – Covid, flu, RSV – seen nationally*
 - **COVID** – *data less meaningful, based on confirmed PCR testing, does not include at-home testing*
 - *Currently at 7.33% positivity rate in 9/100,000 population (significant underestimate)*
 - *Seeing uptick after Thanksgiving*
 - **FLU** - *vaccination best protection (available at pharmacies & providers)*
 - *Preventive measures for all respiratory illnesses: Wash hands, cleaning/disinfecting surfaces, staying away from sick people, staying home if you are sick, masks are effective, vaccinations*
 - *Vaccinations: Covid vaccines age 6 months and up; age 5+ if more than 2 months since last dose); Bivalent boosters more effective against Omicron & latest variants*
 - **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)** – *pediatrics (age 5 and under) majority of cases*
 - *No treatment, no vaccine – wait out, let resolve, seek medical care if needed*
 - *Rates of infection dropping in past weeks*
 - **MPOX (Monkeypox)** – *CCHD offers vaccinations for high-risk population*
 - *Has been seen in countries not seen before; low numbers in Cecil County*
 - *Distinct skin condition (photos available on CDC)*
 - **Infectious Disease:** *Tests for Covid, flu and RSV; meds available if serious illness*
 - *Can receive Covid and flu vaccines at same time. Receive Shingles separately.*
 - *Take 4 weeks after vaccines for full immunity*
 - *Long term issues from Covid – concern is coinfections Covid+, RSV+, Flu+ cases; seeing long term effects from Covid-19 in older populations*
 - *CCHD has at-home Covid tests available*
 - *Current CDC regulations: isolate 5 days; do not return to work if still showing symptoms*

- Seeing high hospitalizations with RSV
- Every 3 years CCHD collaborates with Christiana Care Union – community health needs assessment (look at health conditions in County, data, interviews, focus groups, etc.)
- Report prepared to identify key areas (3 priorities identified)
 - Mental Health (focus on childhood trauma), substance use disorders, and access to health services
 - Mental Health – top priority
 - Seeing a lot of cases in young people; shortage of providers nationwide
 - PLAN:
 - Strengthen formal system of care: strengthen pipeline of candidates, licensing regulations, incentivize service providers from other counties/states
 - Strengthen Informal system of care:
 - Broad-based training/skill development – promote mental health & wellbeing, identify/intervene early signs of distress
 - RFP for mini grants – all organizations working in County eligible; excludes behavioral health providers
 - Use for staff training, activities that foster social connection with educational component
 - Supplement informal system of care
 - Overdose epidemic continues – part of overall Strategic Plan
 - Plan ambitious – will require all-County effort
 - Like to get business community involved in these efforts
 - Welcome EDC feedback, offer staff training, get RFP out there
- Overdose Support Team
 - Support families/children of OD trauma
 - CCPS work to support students identified as having experienced OD trauma at home (counseling, grief support, etc.)
- **Opioid Settlement**
 - Money coming – some coming to State for distribution, some coming directly to County
 - Strategic Plan for Overdose Response: Identifying high-priority activities for when money available
 - Talks re Crisis Stabilization Center for potential use, 24/7 facility
 - Cecil's OD rate 2nd only to Baltimore City
 - Pipeline for behavioral workforce
 - Data Platform – access for all agencies
 - Waiting to hear amount and flexibility for use of funds
 - Money to be disbursed over 18-year time span

Chairman's Report – Bill Sorenson for Mike Ratchford

- November 2, 2022, meeting minutes approved
- Appreciate Lauren's update; appreciate work this commission does

Director's Report – Update on Economic Development – Bill Sorenson, Director OED

- Upper Shore Micro Ag Grant -- Receiving MACo Award in Jan
 - Grant initiated by Maureen
 - Coordinated with Kent and Queen Anne's counties
 - Presented in late 2020; USRC board approved

- 1st year received \$48,000; 2nd year increased; leveraged more funding from MARBIDCO to add to grants
- Each county matched 1-for-1; Total \$305,00 in 2 years to go to grants for ag enterprises
- Partnership between 3 counties, 1 municipal organization, 1 state organization
- USRC already committed for grant program in 2023
- Also submitted application for MEDA Award
- Winter Nights/Cecil Lights – USRC funding again, 3rd year
 - Goal to brighten County, get people out to spend money in downtowns
 - Grant from USRC -- share with towns to purchase lights, plan activities
 - 7 towns participating this year
 - Some events planned: Chesapeake City Sip & Stroll, Lights, Wagon Rides, Fire Pits w/Smores, Night Hike, Soup Event, town decorating contest
 - Web page with info for towns/events
 - Tourism handles marketing (social media, billboards, print) for visitors & locals
 - Starts January 8th
 - MACo Award winning program
- MD 5 Star – 25,000 in attendance (small uptick from previous year)
 - Plan major marketing push to get word out in communities; have more companies sponsor
 - 1 of only 7 events in world

Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) Update – Karen Zuccardi

- Take opportunity to meet everyone
- Intentional for building relationships with rural community
- Want to have office hours in Cecil County (possible Admin building, North East Library)
- Provide opportunities to give entrepreneurs access to State funding
- Present to schools, universities, community projects, workforce projects, etc.
- Offer presentation opportunities to support the ecosystem
- TEDCO created 24 years ago
- \$2.4B economic impact; helped create 10,000 jobs in State
- Maryland ranks third most innovative state in country

North East River Dredging Update – Woody Jackson

- Dredging going forward
- Good relationship with Corp of Engineers
- Performed soundings – spoil site at Cara Cove not enough room
- Had another site around St. Mary Anne’s church -- plan adjusted and resubmitted

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 am.

Next EDC Meeting will be VIRTUAL on January 4, 2023, at 8:00 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant