

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

September 4, 2024

PRESENT

Ariel Balog (Ag-Industry Coordinator), Dr. Mary Bolt (Cecil College), Kristina Brown (Delmarva Power), JoAnn Dawson (Fairwinds), Joe DiNunzio (Artesian Water), Amy DiPietro (MRA), Vince Fiorelli (Chesapeake Utilities), Woody Jackson (Citizen), Ed Jones (Northrop Grumman), Dr. Jeffrey Lawson (CCPS), Joan Pirrung (rep. Amy Marston, Christiana Care-Union), Sandy Maruchi-Turner (Tourism Manager), Robert Palsgrove (Citizen), Michael Ratchford (W.L. Gore & Assoc.), Carl Roberts (BDC), Bill Sorenson (OED Director), Mike Travers (Cecil Dancercenter)

ABSENT

Danny DeMarinis (NEMD URP), Sandra Edwards (OED Mgr.), Kimberly Justus (SWN), Rachel Wright (interim for CCPL)

GUESTS

Stacey Brown (SWN), Alicia Calhoun (Elkton Alliance), Scott Flanigan (CCDPW), Christie Griest (Tourism), Rebecca Hamilton (County Council), Megan McRay (CC Chamber of Commerce), Jenifer Peterson (BDC), Kim Ray (Tourism), Toni Sprenkle (BDC), Kim Swyka (Peoples Bank)

Call to Order & Welcome – Mike Ratchford

- Meeting called to order at 8:00 am
- June 2024 Meeting minutes approved

Chairman's Report – Mike Ratchford

- Soliciting suggestions for speakers/presenters as well as topics of interest
- Hope to have new County Executive speak to EDC after election

Director's Report – Bill Sorenson

- Cecil's 350th Anniversary this year
 - Sept. 21 – Fireworks Celebration @ Chesapeake City
 - Time Capsule – to be buried TBD @ Administration Building in Elkton; to be opened in 50 years
- Upcoming Events:
 - September 24 -- Governor's Office of Small Business Affairs connecting small businesses from Cecil and Harford Counties with Hollywood Casino's procurement process, 10:00am -12:30pm
 - AquaCon – Salmon farming fishery coming to Bainbridge
 - Big team win; First salmon to be harvested in 2028 in Cecil County
 - MD 5 Star coming up – hope to see everyone there; information will be forthcoming
 - Prospect – possible relocation to Elkton, advanced logistics
 - Sept. 26 – GBC beginning to socialize assessment plan for Baltimore 10-Year Economic Opportunities and Recovery Plan; to be held at North East Library

An update on Cecil County Public Schools was presented by Dr. Jeff Lawson, Superintendent, CCPS

- 1st and last day of school – Best time of year!

- Blueprint made up of five pillars:
 - Pillar I – Early Education
 - 700+ three and four-year olds enrolled
 - Pillar II – Teacher Retention and Quality
 - Trying to increase teacher starting salary to \$60K
 - Important to get through next two years of blueprint
 - Pillar III – College and Career Ready
 - Record number of students taking dual enrollment (take college courses while in high school)
 - Some students achieved Associate’s degrees before high school diploma
 - If interested in having high school students in your business, contact CCPS
 - Pillar IV – More Resources for Student Success
 - Pillar V – Governance and Accountability
 - Where every dollar is going
- New North East Middle High School being built
 - \$185M (60% State / 40% County)
 - 2,000 Middle and High School students – will be largest school in CCPS system
 - Auditorium will have 1,000 seats
 - Scheduled opening July 1, 2027
- New School Year Odds and Ends:
 - Perryville High School field house construction, groundbreaking expected any day
 - Junior Reserve Officer Training (JROTC) Program at Elkton High School
 - 51 New Teachers
 - Expected Enrollment 14,800 – 15,000
 - End-of-Year Fund Balance allows for:
 - No Pay to Play Sports
 - Reinstatement of Student Support Centers
 - Reinstatement of Middle School Sports

An update on Cecil College was presented by Dr. Mary Bolt, President, Cecil College

- Budget cut from State over \$1M, recovered \$187K
- Birth rate down in country, State, and County
- 50-52% of Cecil population out commutes
- Enrollment down for fall semester in credit courses; enrollment increase in continuing education
- Anticipating State fund for cyber – provide access to skills training
- Offering ABE/GED at Cecil County Detention Center
- Cecil College Career Services:
 - Services for student & employers; will post job openings, internship and apprenticeship opportunities for employers
- Amazon Career Choice Program:
 - 20 students currently enrolled
 - 1 student has completed Associate degree in Business
 - Amazon pays tuition and fees in advance
 - Cecil College IR shares academic progress data
- Early College Academy:
 - Began in 2014 with 15 students from Oxford; 248 total graduates since inception
 - Out of 53 graduates in 2024: 23 graduated with highest honors; 7 graduated with honors; 7 graduated with overall GPA of 4.0
 - 76 incoming 9th grade students

- Students Enrolled in Onsite Courses:
 - Fall 2023 – Spring 2024 Semesters = Yearly total of 93 students from all 5 high schools
- New Programs:
 - Emergency Medicine Technician (EMT)
 - LDC Hospitality Management
 - LDC Data Science
 - AAS Skilled Trades
 - Basic Electrical
- Workforce Programs:
 - Automotive Repair
 - Basic Construction Skills
 - Basic Electrical
 - Diesel Technology
 - Heavy Equipment Operations
 - HVAC/R
 - Marine Service Technology – partnership with Bohemia River Marina
 - Pest Management – currently national shortage
 - Utility Training – training partnership with Delmarva; looking to hire entry-level utility workers
 - Can become lineman in 3-5 years
 - Welding
 - CDL
- New Library Laptop Lending Program:
 - Short term or semester long basis
 - Students sign borrower agreement, outlining use and care expectations
- VLT Grants Supporting Students:
 - Cecil County Transit; Student Emergency Grants
- Student Life:
 - Campus food pantry, Four new clubs, PTK Honor Society; Peer Mentoring program, “The Flock”
 - Student Roost Game Room
 - International Students – F-1 Visas, DACA & Dream
- MD Behavioral Health Grant:
 - Student Wellbeing Office
 - Positions: Student Wellbeing Special; Coordinator of Mental Health Services
 - Scholarships for Students pursuing degrees in Social Work
 - TimelyCare telehealth counseling sessions
- Athletics:
 - New softball coach, Chad Zearfoss
 - 12 Academic All-American student-athletes
 - New door wrap & gym floor refinished

98% would recommend Cecil College to others

Others:

Cecil County Chamber of Commerce – Megan McRay

- Sept. 25 – Your Non-Profit Toolkit @ Great Wolf Lodge; Professionals to speak and work with clients at workshop
- Sept. 27 – GRC Meeting & CCST Tour @ Cecil County School of Technology
- Oct 3 – 5th Annual Business by the Bonfire @ Milburn Orchards
- Oct. 9 – Candidate Forum @ Milburn Stone Theater

- Visit website for registration and events listing

Government Relations Committee – Dr. Carl Roberts

- GRC focus on things of interest to Chamber members
- GRC meeting host @ CCST on Sept. 27, 8:00-11:30am
 - Hear from students, teachers, leadership on preparing workforce for future

Elkton Alliance – Alicia Calhoun

- Received State grant funds to connect new businesses into vacant building in Elkton
- Received VLT funds for beautification of downtown Elkton
- Sept. 13-14 – 27th Annual Fall Fest

Council Update – Councilwoman Rebecca Hamilton

- Looking to attend future meetings and appreciate presentations today

Christiana Care/Union Hospital – Joan Pirrung, Chief Nursing Officer (on behalf of Amy Marston)

- Filling in for Amy; happy to be part of EDC group

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am

Next EDC Meeting is October 2, 2024, and will be VIRTUAL. Details to follow.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terri Springel
Administrative Assistant