

St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission

Commissioner's Meeting Room, Chesapeake Bldg.

41770 Baldrige St., Leonardtown, Maryland

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The April 17, 2024 Meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 6:00 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Members in attendance were:

Curtis Brown

Lisa Colavito

Leona Charles

Mahree Annan

Dr. Dale Moore

Frederick Stewart

Dr. Silvio Borrero

Trisha Post

Guests in attendance included:

Chris Kaselemis, Director, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development (DED)

Kellie Hinkle, Deputy Director, St. Mary's County DED

Sue Veith, Planner, St. Mary's County DED

Katherine Stormont, Economic Development Specialist, St. Mary's County DED

Liz Mildenstein, Executive Director, Visit St. Mary's

Tony Sigmon, Vice President of Development YMCA Chesapeake

Members not in attendance

Elizabeth Torgerson

Dr. Christine Bergmark

Richard Tarr

Gerald Meyerman

Lilyanne Ohanesian

3. OLD BUSINESS**A. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the January 17, 2024 meeting were not available for approval.

4. PRESENTATIONS**5. NEW BUSINESS****A. Announcements**

Chris Kaselemis, Director of St. Mary's County DED, introduced Liz Mildenstein as the new Executive Director of Visit St. Mary's to the Commission. Mr. Kaselemis then announced that Sue Veith, a Planner with the DED, will be retiring April 30, 2024. Mr. Kaselemis then introduced the newest member of the Economic Development Commission, Mahree Annan. Mahree stated that she was a student at the St. Mary's College of Maryland and was looking forward to volunteering.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS) Update**I. CEDS Related Workforce Development & Talent Attraction Project Updates**

Dr. Dale Moore, Executive Vice President of the Southern Maryland Navy Alliance, spoke of creating a learning eco-system in Southern Maryland to accelerate learning for students and professionals. Dr. Moore spoke of expanding education development with training and innovation to sustain Southern Maryland's Competitiveness. The Southern Maryland Navy Alliance secured funding to set up the SoMD 2030 Workforce Program which **connects talented students with paid apprenticeships and internships in southern MD**. It enhances the success of the TechJobsRule (TJR) high school apprentice program with the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (Forrest Tech Center) of St. Mary's County Public Schools, **Naval Air Warfare Center Aviation Division (NAWCAD)**, The Patuxent Partnership (TPP) member companies and the Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP) approved employers in St. Mary's County. It creates college internship opportunities with local industry, government, and nonprofits – leading to additional education and career opportunities. The Program is working with St. Mary's College of Maryland, the College of Southern Maryland, St. Mary's, Charles and Calvert County Public Schools, as well as other schools, industry, and NAWCAD.

Lisa Colavito, College of Southern Maryland (CSM), updated the Commission of CSM initiatives. CSM enriches lives and bolsters the economic vitality of our diverse region through accessible postsecondary education, workforce development, and cultural enrichment opportunities. Beyond traditional academics, CSM is committed to community and continuing education initiatives, furthering their mission to empower individuals and uplift our community. CSM believes in bridging the gap between education and industry through our Work-Based Learning Program, offering paid internships with local employers. This strategic initiative connects CSM students with real-life work experiences, allowing them to apply academic and technical skills, fostering employability.

Ms. Colavito also informed the Commission of the Velocity Center which is operated by CSM and serves as a dynamic hub for innovation, learning, and collaboration among academia, the Navy, and the wider community. This collaborative space fosters workforce development and economic growth in Southern Maryland, hosting community events for entrepreneurs, hackathons with cash prizes, and providing makerspace tools and classes. The makerspace at the Velocity Center was established in 2023 and serves as an innovation hub for entrepreneurs, facilitating interactions with panels of subject matter experts. Additionally, it offers in-depth collaboration with small business employers and their teams to assess needs for improvement and develop impactful strategies for the future.

Lastly, Ms. Colavito spoke of the Small Business Development Center, Nonprofit Institute, Workforce Center, and Maryland Center for Environmental Training are key Continuing Education Entities. These agencies specialize in business ownership, nonprofit management, workforce development, and environmental safety training, playing crucial roles in serving local businesses and providing community education. Together, they foster holistic growth and prosperity in the community.

Katherine Stormont, Economic Development Specialist with St. Mary's County DED informed the Commission of the Department's development of a new Attraction/Awareness Campaign for the Spring 2024 to spotlight local companies that are developing products and services that are remarkable in terms of diversity, geographic distribution and application. The theme of this campaign will be "St. Mary's Around the World".

Ms. Stormont also updated the Commission TechBook Resource Guide will be redesigned in a more condensed print format and drive users to the electronic component which is more updated than the print version. The Commission was encouraged to submit suggestions for inclusion in the TechBook.

Chirs Kaselemis spoke of Affordable & Workforce Housing issues facing St. Mary's County. DED has recently formed an internal group to review things such as incentive programs for developers to build affordable and workforce housing.

II. CEDS Related Tech Transfer, Development & Innovation Project Updates

Sue Veith, Planner, DED, briefed the Commission of the Military Installation Resiliency Review (MIRR) Initial Findings & Recommendations. The Naval Air Station reached out to the County about seeking an Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) grant to conduct a MIRR Military Installation Resilience Review. The purpose of this review is to assess the capability of a military installation to avoid, prepare for, minimize the effect of, adapt to, and recover from extreme weather events, or from anticipated or unanticipated changes in environmental conditions, that do, or have the potential to, adversely affect the military installation or essential transportation, logistical, or other necessary resources outside of the military installation that are necessary in order to maintain, improve, or rapidly reestablish installation mission assurance and mission-essential functions. The Grant Program Goals:

- Provide a cooperative, community-driven planning effort that leverages the capabilities and strengths of state and local governments to address resilience and encroachment risks;
- Protect and enhance the public health, safety, and general welfare of those living and working near an active military installation,
- Protect and enhance military readiness and defense capabilities while supporting continued community economic development; and,
- Enhance civilian and military communication and collaboration.

St. Mary's County sought the grant in partnership with The Low Impact Development Center who, with their consultant Thrope Environmental, are providing services to complete the review and report. The project is 12 months into the 18-month grant cycle with work completed so far:

- Kick-off meeting with local and NAS PAX staff & officials
- Established a Steering Workgroup
- Literature Review
- Peer-to-Peer Exchange to learn from other defense communities: key findings in common, compare examples of possible actions, activities, programs and projects
- Topical Discussions
- Draft risk assessment & recommendations; draft proposals for project and programs.

Next steps include:

- Finalize Hazards Inventory matrix
- Finalize Risk Assessment matrix
 - Existing planning, funding, regulatory, and institutional capacity
 - Adaptation and mitigation needs
 - Types of projects and programs
 - Resilience priorities for Action Strategy:
 - Mitigating the impact of hazards
- Finalize Action Priorities
 - Capital projects
 - Programs
- Consultants produce Draft Report, Executive Summary, & Appendices (recommendations will include financing needs & resources)
- Final MIRR Study after OLDCC, NAS PAX, & Community reviews

St. Mary's County is also planning a tabletop exercise with NAS Patuxent River and other Partners to look at a likely hazard and review how the military and community will respond.

Chris Kaselemis updated the Commission about the AeroPark Innovation District Projects. DED is working with the St. Mary's County Department of Public Works to use State funding to do external improvements to the Airport Terminal including landscaping, installing a shade pavilion and seating. The West End along the runway has about 15 acres that are developable, DED is working with the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) to get that land ready for development.

III. **CEDS Related Local Agriculture, Forestry, and Seafood Project Updates**

Kellie Hinkle, Deputy, Director of St. Mary's County DED, recounted Priscilla Leith's presentation to the Commission in January about the Barns at New Market Projects including the parking lot expansion and the installation of a Best Available Technology (BAT) septic system. Ms. Hinkle announced that 45 parking spaces were added, and the project was completed ahead of schedule, so the market was able to reopen early. The second project was the installation of the BAT Septic System to allow for the processing of higher fat content foods in the commercial kitchen.

IV. **CEDS Related Rural Development & Quality of Place Project Updates**

Chris Kaselemis briefed the Board on the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Sustainable Communities Program. The Sustainable Communities Program is a place-based designation offering a comprehensive package of resources that support holistic strategies for community development, revitalization and sustainability. Sustainable Communities has provided local governments with a framework for promoting environmentally, economically and socially responsible growth and development in existing older communities. St. Mary's County has 3 designated Sustainable Communities consisting of Lexington Park, Charlotte Hall, and Leonardtown.

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 established a shared geographic designation to promote efficient use of scarce State resources based on local sustainability and revitalization strategies. The Sustainable Communities program consolidated geographically targeted resources for historic preservation, housing and economic development under a single designation. The designation places special emphasis on infrastructure improvements, multimodal transportation and development that strengthens existing communities.

Sustainable Community Areas are defined as places where public and private investments and partnerships achieve:

- Development of a healthy local economy;
- Protection and appreciation of historical and cultural resources;
- A mix of land uses;
- Affordable and sustainable housing, and employment options;
- Growth and development practices that protect the environment and conserve air, water and energy resources, encourage walkability and recreational opportunities, and where available, create access to transit.

St. Mary's County was just awarded its second \$50,000 Façade Improvements Grant for Lexington Park property owners wishing to add exterior improvements to their businesses. This could be a sign, landscaping, parking lot, or other improvements. The County's current designation expires in September 2024, and staff are working on the process to have the designation renewed.

Tony Sigmon, Vice President of Development YMCA Chesapeake, presented to the Commission the benefits of the YMCA Project in St. Mary's County. Over the past decade, community leaders have worked tirelessly to advocate for a community center that would provide programs and services for the residents of St. Mary's County. In 2019, the St. Mary's County Commissioners established an exploratory committee to substantiate community need, programs and services and possible locations. The Committee was also charged with determining if the YMCA could be the partner of choice. Working with the YMCA of the Chesapeake, St. Mary's County commissioned a third - party study to determine need, location and potential involvement. The results were overwhelmingly positive showing a new YMCA located next to Great Mills High School could serve 10,000 community members on a regular basis!

Mr. Sigmon stated the new 63,000 square foot 2-story YMCA Facility will be located next to the existing Great Mills Pool and will include:

- State of the art wellness center
- Six lane pool with easy entry and space for swim lesson and young swimmers
- Double gymnasium including two full size basketball courts, 4 basketball halfcourts, six pickleball courts, 2 volleyball courts
- Elevated Indoor walking track
- 5 indoor multiple purpose spaces
- Stay and play area for our youngest participants
- Community meeting spaces
- Teaching kitchen
- Social spaces
- A place to connect to other seniors, preventing isolationism among seniors who have lost a spouse.
- A place where everyone feels welcomed and comes together as a community.

Mr. Sigmon also talked of how YMCAs transform communities through long- term investments in people strengthening other charities and collaborative partnerships in the region. In other communities the YMCA:

- provide free meeting space for outside community groups.
- partner with school districts to support systemic enhancements to curriculum – e.g. Learn to Swim, swim team programming.
- work with local hospital systems to expand chronic disease programming and establish/maintain referral networks.
- provide free YMCA programming to enhance participation and engagement in partner services – e.g. Summer Meals Program.

Locally the YMCA plans to employ 5-7 full time professional staff with 100 – 150 part time staff. The current timeline for the project is

- Architectural and engineering work is in process
- Quiet phase community campaign November 2023 – October 2024
- Community phase capital campaign April 2024
- Break ground on new YMCA in the fall of 2024 (90% of goal)
- Open new YMCA facility Winter 2026

Addressing Commission questions, Mr. Sigmon said sidewalks and paths from the neighborhoods for direct walk/bike access to the YMCA. Since this facility will be on the campus of a high school, this YMCA will provide a significant tutoring program. The YMCA has worked with the St. Mary's County Board of Education to have a placeholder for a program to teach every 5th grader how to swim and will offer a free membership to every 6th grader in the County.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Dale Moore motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Trisha Post.

Yea - Curtis Brown, Lisa Colavito, Leona Charles, Mahree Annan, Dr. Dale Moore, Frederick Stewart, Dr. Silvio Borrero, Trisha Post

Minutes taken by Lisa Ledman, DED.