



Thursday, February 20th, 2025

4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

**Historic Inns of Annapolis
Governor Calvert Ballroom
58 State Street, Annapolis, MD**

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members in Attendance

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| 1. Ricardo Benn | Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce
(on behalf of Acting Secretary Harry Coker) |
| 2. Robert Braun, Ph.D. | Space Exploration Sector Head, Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory |
| 3. Georgie Brophy | Board Member, Maryland Space Business Roundtable |
| 4. Willie Brown, Ph.D. | Vice Provost, University of Maryland Eastern Shore |
| 5. Mark Chang | Delegate, Anne Arundel County |
| 6. Alison Flatau, Ph.D. | Chair, Department of Aerospace Engineering, University of Maryland College Park |
| 7. Ryan Gerard | President, Goddard Contractors Association |
| 8. Charles Ichoku, Ph.D. | Professor, Director of GESTAR II, University of Maryland Baltimore County |
| 9. Barbara Lam | CFO/VP, Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) |
| 10. Jennifer Lotz, Ph.D. | Director, Space Telescope Science Institute |
| 11. Dale Moore, EdD | President, Southern Maryland Navy Alliance |
| 12. Robert Rashford | President and CEO of Genesis Engineering |
| 13. Janeen Tracy Uzell | CEO, National Society of Black Engineers |

Department of Commerce Attendees

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| 1. John Gilstrap | Assistant Secretary |
| 2. Colter Menke | Aerospace Program Manager |
| 3. Matt Cimino, Ph.D. | Senior Manager, Life Sciences Business Development |

General Public Attendees

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| 1. Brandon Eden | Johns Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory |
| 2. Dennis Feerick | The Aerospace Corporation |
| 3. Phillina Tookes | NASA Goddard Space Flight Center |
| 4. Rob Quigley | Intuitive Machines |
| 5. Lee Greely | St Mary's County Economic Development |
| 6. Joe DeVooght | Textron |

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| 7. Kaushik Anantha | Student |
| 8. Alexander Rauda | Actum |
| 9. Cedric Jacob | Rocket Lab |
| 10. Jennifer Goodrum | Rocket Lab |
| 11. John Slaughter | UMD UAS Research and Operations Center |
| 12. Matt Cimino | Maryland Department of Commerce |

Welcome and Introductions

Deputy Secretary Ricardo Benn introduced himself and mentioned that Maryland is at an inflection point, with an opportunity to capitalize on a multitude of assets.

He mentioned that this Commission is tasked with the development of a strategic plan which should be coupled with more immediate action plans. Governor Moore has proposed a sweeping growth initiative and has identified aerospace and more specifically precision, navigation and timing (PNT) as a strategic sector. Investment into aerospace and PNT will assist in the work of other commissions.

Deputy Secretary Benn then invited the new commissioners to introduce themselves. Dr. Willie Brown, Vice Provost of UMES and Dr. Robert Rashford, CEO of Genesis Engineering introduced themselves and provided some information about their background.

Minutes of the October 23, 2024 MATC Meeting

Deputy Secretary Benn called for the approval of the meeting minutes from the previous MATC meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Deputy Secretary Benn let the commissioners know that they would need to elect a Chair and Vice Chair amongst themselves. The commissioners were invited to consider the roles and reach out to Commerce staff if they would like to be considered or if they wished to submit a nomination.

Strategic Plan Development Kickoff

- ***Introduction to the Strategic Plan Requirements***

Deputy Secretary Benn then opened the meeting up to discuss the strategic plan which the Commission is responsible for developing.

- ***Initial Discussion on Key Components and Goals***

Ms. Brophy asked how the Commission should prioritize what is covered in the report. Dr. Moore mentioned that there is a large landscape that needs to be understood and exploited, which should be step one of the strategic plan. They also discussed that the Commission should set a baseline for the state of the industry and look to other states as examples for best practices. Deputy Secretary Benn reminded the commissioners that they are empowered to employ a consultant and the definition of the scope of the strategic plan may be a good area for the consultant to consider.

Mr. Gerard noted that there may be synergies between aerospace and quantum technologies which can be helpful to connect the state's other lighthouse sectors. Dr. Moore and Deputy

Secretary Benn also mentioned artificial intelligence and other strategic industries that may be complimentary to each other. Dr. Brown asked to clarify if the strategic plan will be used for the purpose of aerospace economic development and Deputy Secretary Benn answered that the focus of the strategic plan is in the purview of the Commission.

Ms. Brophy then asked the research and development organizations what they see as important aspects to be included in the strategic report. Dr. Lotz mentioned that there is currently an uncertain environment within the federal and aerospace organizations in the state. Dr. Ichoku mentioned that creating a center of excellence and/or business incubator within the state would be a valuable asset to promote the aerospace industry. Dr. Moore identified the Aeropark in Southern Maryland as an example of a region within Maryland that has created an identity as a leader in aerospace and suggested that the federal laboratories could also be important partners for the Commission.

Mr. Gerard mentioned that the workforce at NASA Goddard is between major missions at the moment and may have the capacity to support the establishment of a center of excellence. Ms. Brophy pointed out that there are many very capable professionals in the Maryland workforce that find themselves in silos that need to be combined to connect the workforce. Dr. Moore pointed to the work taking place in Southern Maryland that brings great collaboration amongst the groups. Dr. Brown emphasized that there are many industries and organizations outside of aerospace that can contribute and asked how the state can make it easy for these organizations to collaborate. Possibly the creation of a central depository of information about organizations would be helpful. Mr. Gerard mentioned that the creation of an incubator makes a lot of sense to enact quick change.

Deputy Secretary Benn mentioned that a timeline would need to be identified to help a consultant determine priorities for the report and Dr. Braun noted that a strategic plan needs to be thoughtful. He suggested that a consultant identify areas of success from other states which would help develop a plan for Maryland. He also noted that Maryland has a strength in support for the aerospace industry related to federal work, but not with commercial work. Maryland lacks large commercial entities and instead has many federally-focused entities. Dr. Moore said that it would be useful to determine why commercial companies don't choose to locate in Maryland. Mr. Gerard mentioned that Maryland has a very federally-focused workforce and the industry still needs to keep an eye on that. The Commission should focus on areas for expansion that do not directly compete with the federal work that is already in the state.

Ms. Brophy mentioned that Maryland needs commercial organizations to bring resources and jobs into the state. She provided an example of Rocket Lab and wondered why they chose Maryland. There are likely ripe moments to attract companies and stories that exist that can be used to bring other companies here. She mentioned that a role for a consultant would be to establish the baseline of where the state currently stands and the return on investment for plans for the future.

Dr. Flatau mentioned that two areas of growth she has seen from her perspective at the University of Maryland are Cislunar Space and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), (she later

added Supersonic Flight to this list). Ms. Brophy wondered what it would take to become the center for those industries. Dr. Moore mentioned that Maryland needs to improve how it is perceived by the nation, that it needs to wave its flag more. Mr. Gerard noted that a good way to do that would be to choose niche industries in which to excel.

Dr. Flatau said she has seen a trend of students being trained in these industries at the University of Maryland and then being hired by AAM manufacturers and being taken out of state. She also noted that much of the aerospace industry in the state is the home for headquarters of the businesses and not necessarily where the engineers work. The employers here in Maryland are predominantly federal.

Ms. Uzell introduced herself to the Commission and said that tech is a vibe. If people don't feel the vibe in the state, there is a perception that there is no tech vibe here. She mentioned that the vibe is all encompassing and not just focused on the jobs, it is also in the homes, restaurants, entertainment, etc. Once the state is known for its tech vibe, it's here. Ms. Brophy then asked how the state can create the vibe. Ms. Uzell provided Atlanta as an example; it's not necessarily tech-focused but it's attractive to the youth in the industry. She mentioned Miami and its acceptance of cryptocurrencies; it didn't compete against other states in the niche industry. Ms. Uzell mentioned that her organization, the National Society of Black Engineers, will be holding their annual conference in Baltimore in 2026 which will bring 20,000 people to the city. She noted that there are a lot of high-profile conferences which would raise the state's profile.

Dr. Braun mentioned that Johns Hopkins University has developed a mini startup tech venture headquarters on their campus centered around life sciences. Due to the success of businesses coming out of JHU the area has become a good incubator. Deputy Secretary Benn said that Boston does something similar and asked the group how this could be tailored to the aerospace industry. Dr. Brown mentioned that the tech companies the state is trying to attract is a more futuristic experience, and that Maryland needs to develop that environment more. Mr. Gerard noted that the group should keep in mind the federal workforce and environment that's present in Maryland and identify complementary industries to target. Ms. Brophy mentioned that marketing is still pivotal to create buzz and branding for the state and that it must emphasize the importance of aerospace here.

Formation of Advisory Committees and Identification of Committee Leads

Deputy Secretary Benn turned the conversation toward the identification and establishment of committees to help advance the goals of the Commission. The commissioners identified three committees and determined their leadership to be the following:

- Strategic Plan Development – Dr. Moore
- Creation of VC Summit/pitch competition – Ms. Brophy, Dr. Flatau
- Marketing and Messaging – Ms. Uzell

Public Comments/Discussion

Lee Greely, Economic Development Specialist, St. Mary's County – The Commission should continue to support existing businesses in Maryland and help them to grow in addition to looking for new

businesses to locate here. He mentioned he would like to have an avenue for local economic development organizations to present issues to the MATC.

Matt Cimino, Senior Manager Business Development Life Sciences, MDOC – MATC should look at the aerospace industry internationally as well and may choose to market to international centers of aerospace to attract new businesses to the state.

Cedric Jacob, Director of Operations Space Structure Complex, Rocket Lab – AAM is specifically applicable to Maryland due to the unique feature of the Chesapeake Bay splitting the state in half. He noted that the MATC should highlight federal and commercial aerospace as a strength for the state and not as silos. As a new aerospace company in the state, Mr. Jacob mentioned that the hard part for a new company in the state is understanding and building connections to solve problems associated with local regulations and zoning. He proposed helping startups and new Maryland businesses with the “boring” stuff and helping to develop connections which would create an atmosphere that’s attractive to bring businesses here.

Dennis Feerick, Vice President Corporate Strategy, The Aerospace Corporation – The situation concerning the aerospace industry in the state is critical. He suggested that the committees should be domain focused and noted that Maryland can be the convener of the region for the aerospace industry.

Rob Quigley, Chief Engineer, Intuitive Machines – Mr. Quigley seconded the idea of making Maryland the hub for cislunar technology and research. He also suggested that instead of working to find companies who would like to move their entire organization to Maryland, it may be more worthwhile to identify our specific strengths in the workforce and try to attract branches of companies here who are looking for those specific employee capabilities.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Deputy Secretary Benn provided a recap of the discussion, noted that an MATC chair and vice chair would either be determined before the next meeting or at the next meeting and reviewed the advisory committees that had been determined. He also thanked those from the public for their comments and mentioned that it was good public discourse.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.