



December 14, 2020

Via Google Meet

<https://meet.google.com/uoh-buxt-zyh?hs=122&authuser=0>,

Phone in 1-904-717-5059, PIN: 997116554#

12:00pm – 2:00pm

Minutes

**Commissioners in attendance:**

Anirban Basu	MEDC Chair, Sage Policy Group
Margaret Wood	MEDC Vice Chair, WOOD Consulting
Howard Blackwell Bowen	Ewing Oil Company, Inc.
Ed Coleman	Ciox Health
Annemarie Dickerson	Francis Scott Key Family Resort
Joshua Greene	O.A. Smith Corporation
Kai Hirabayshi	Amazon
Arnold Jablon	Venable
Manish Kothari	Sheladia Associates, Inc.
Julie Lenzer	UM Ventures
Aris Melissaratos	St. John Properties
Laura Neuman	Entrepreneur
Jeanette Glose Partlow	Maryland Chemical Company, Inc.
Elizabeth Rendón-Sherman	LG-TEK
Robert Wallace	BITHGROUP Technologies

**Ex-Officio Members:**

Secretary Kelly Schulz	Department of Commerce
Michael Harrison for Secretary Tiffany Robinson	Department of Labor
Robert Brennan	Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO)
Troy LeMaile-Stovall	Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO)

**Guests:**

Meredith Wimbrow	Office of the Governor
Emily Haskel	Maryland Legislative Services
Elizabeth Shwe	Maryland Matters
Charlotte Davis	Rural Maryland Council
Erika Schissler	Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Staff

Nicholas Manis

Manis Canning & Associates

**Commerce Staff:**

Julie Woepke	MEDC Executive Director
Signe Pringle	Assistant Secretary
Tom Riford	Assistant Secretary
Kyle McColgan	Special Assistant to the Secretary
Jayson Knott	Senior Director
Rhonda Ray	Managing Director
Heather Gramm	Senior Director
Jessica Reynolds	Senior Director
Jennifer LaHatte	Director
John Papavasiliou	Chief Operating Officer
Nancy McCrea	Research Director
Michael Siers	Economist

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Basu called the meeting to order at 12:02pm and welcomed attendees and guests. The Chairman introduced the newest Commissioner, Arnold Jablon, Esq., who is a Speaker of the House Appointee. Roll Call was then taken.

**II. Chairman's Updates**

Chairman Basu began his presentation by disclosing his comments were his personally and do not reflect the opinion of the Commission. He expressed his disappointment in the State's 7.8% unemployment rate in light of entering the post-holiday seasonal unemployment increase. He recommended that in the future, the State plan ahead for these type of pandemics and their subsequent economic impacts. He pointed to the impact of locally mandated closure of restaurants particularly when the State has provided financial support to assist restaurants to remain open. He questioned whether the jurisdictions evaluate the impact of such actions on businesses. Chairman Basu's comments led to a discussion among the Commissioners who recognized that it is a balancing act and that it is important to follow the science related to reopening of businesses.

**III. Consent Agenda**

Upon separate motions duly made and seconded, the Commission approved items III. a. Meeting Minutes of July 27, 2020 and III. e. Maryland Economic Development Assistance Fund and Authority (MEDAAF) Advantage Maryland Annual Industry Sector Review. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Commission accepted items III. b. c. and d.

The Chair also announced that the Department's FY22 Budget Submission was reviewed. While there will be challenges ahead due to the current economic climate, the Budget request is in accordance with the Strategic Plan.

#### **IV. Commerce Secretary Update**

Secretary Schulz began her presentation by giving an overview to date of the Federal Funds received by Maryland businesses from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and EIDL Advance Programs. She then broke down the disbursement of the \$250 million Rainy Day Funds released by the Governor in October.

Mr. Michael Siers continued the Department's presentation by providing an overview of the State's current economic situation and data points that are being tracked. He also provided an update on the Task Force for the Economic Future of Western Maryland. Secretary Schulz then provided an overview of the Annual Report, Personnel, Statewide Innovation Programs and ongoing outreach with the public, legislators, economic development partners, and the distribution of information on various forms of media.

Mr. Jayson Knott gave an overview of the major business development activities since the Commission's last meeting in July. He described three (3) recent wins and 1,485 new jobs resulting from pending business attraction and expansion projects. He noted the number of remaining projects in the pipeline including headquarters projects in Baltimore City and the Capitol Region, three (3) government projects and projects in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

Commissioner Annemarie Dickerson brought to the Commission's attention the continuous need for workforce in the hospitality industry in Ocean City and described a few innovative public private measures to address the shortages.

Assistant Secretary Tom Riford provided an update on the Maryland Marketing Partnership activity by describing pandemic adjustments to advertising, media placements, and marketing. He highlighted new ads that continue tell the story of Maryland's workforce, quality of life and business opportunity. He then reported that the Partnership had hired Abel Communications for a National Public Relations Campaign.

Mr. Riford then presented the update on the Office of Tourism and described the Open for Tourism Campaign; and stated the Office continues to coordinate with hotels, restaurants, County tourism offices, and the tourism coalition. He stated the Office of Tourism recruited fellows to work on the 400 Years of African American History project. He then provided visitor/customer spending and the economic impact of tourism to the State. He concluded by noting the launch of the revamped VistMaryland.Org and the increased traffic to the website.

Ms. Jessica Reynolds provided an update on the Office of International Investment and Trade (OIIT). With travel halted, the Office continues to be active with virtual programming, strategic initiatives such as formal signing of agreements foreign countries, funding businesses through

the Small Business Administration (SBA) State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) Program and planning of upcoming initiatives.

Secretary Schulz then introduced the Department's new Chief Operating Officer, John Papavasiliou who made introductory comments.

All Presentations are on file.

## **V. TEDCO Update**

Mr. Troy LeMaile-Stovall, CEO & Executive Director addressed the Commission and provided an overview of activities of TEDCO, its core values, focus and areas of concentration to include expanding work with community colleges, Frostburg University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore and others to develop and nurture innovation. He emphasized the importance of knitting resources, rethinking the definition of investment, inclusiveness across the state, rural vs urban, and intentional inclusivity. He stated funding for businesses need not rely on TEDCO as the lead investor. Mr. Stovall then responded to comments made by Commissioner Bob Wallace who inquired whether there is a metrix of investment into specific regions to determine inclusiveness. Mr. Stovall said they are looking for physical space in Baltimore City and throughout the state to have more presence. He thanked the Commission and said he looked forward to working together. Presentation on file.

## **VI. MEDCO Update**

Mr. Bob Brennan, Executive Director, provided an overview of MEDCO activities noting that development projects had not lessened due to the pandemic. He stated construction was strong and protocols taken to create safe spaces. In addition to providing the Corporation's Fiscal Year Activities at a glance, noting the recent clean audit, bonding activity and several construction projects. Presentation on file.

## **VII. Subcommittees**

Commissioner Ed Coleman, Chair of the Rankings and Research Subcommittee, noted the updated Scorecard reflects some of the previous discussion among the Commissioners. He encouraged all to review the Scorecard where they will find a number of strong indicators that the State is moving forward and progressing in many areas despite the pandemic.

## **VIII. Good of the Order**

Commissioner Partlow brought to the Commission's attention the recent Federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) ruling prohibiting the use of Federal EIDL and PPP funds for ordinary business expenses. She raised this concern in addition the depletion of program funds. Secretary Schulz said the State has expressed concern regarding the extension of Federal relief funds to the Federal Delegation. She added that the State recently announced the forgiveness of CARES Act loans and what an impact that would be made if the Federal Government does the same.

Secretary Schulz said Commerce could prepare a letter on behalf of the Commission to forward to the Federal Delegation with the concern expressed by Commissioner Partlow.

**IX. 2021 Meetings**

The 2021 meeting schedule was announced by the Chair.

**X. Adjournment**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 2:13pm.