



May 11, 2022
Rocky Gap Casino Resort, Allegany Center Side A
16701 Lakeview Road NE, Flintstone
12:00pm – 2:00pm
Minutes

Commissioners in attendance:

Ed Coleman	Co-Chair, Ameren
Margaret Wood, D.A. PMP	Co-Chair, WOOD Consulting
Susan Chambers	Strouse
Anmarie Dickerson	King Cole Farm – Call in
Jeanette Glose Partlow	Maryland Chemical, Inc. – Call in
Arnold Jablon	Formerly with Venable, LLP – Call in
Gwen McCall	F&L Construction and Solid Waste, LLC
Melissa Noel	Noel Fire Protection, LLC
Laura Neuman	Entrepreneur
Leon Pinkett III	Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation (BARCO)
Saif Rehman	NexGen Consulting, Inc. – Call in
Elizabeth Rendón-Sherman	LG TEK – Call in
Gary Ruddell	Total Biz Fulfillment
Eugene Silverman, PhD	Berkeley Springs Instruments
Robert Wallace	BITHGROUP Technologies – Call in

Ex-Officio Members:

Secretary R. Michael Gill	Department of Commerce
Tom Sadowski	Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) – Call in
Troy LaMaile-Stovall	Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) – Call in

Guests:

Brian Kurtz	Rocky Gap Casino Resort
Al Delia	Frostburg State University
Patrick Kelly	FirstEnergy
Lucas Cade	FirstEnergy
Erika Schissler	Maryland Legislative Services – Call in
Emily Haskel	Maryland Legislative Services – Call in
Hunter Marsh	Delegate Crosby – Call in
Ashli Workman	Allegany County
Cheryl DeBerry	Garrett County
Kim Durst	Garrett County
Connor Norman	Garrett County

Commerce Staff:

Julie Woepke	MEDC Executive Director
Tom Riford	Assistant Secretary
Kyle McColgan	Chief of Staff
Jayson Knott	Senior Director
Jessica Reynolds	Managing Director
Jennifer LaHatte	Managing Director
Michael Siers	Economist
Wade Waerle	Program Manager
Lori Ratzburg	Senior Director

I. Call to Order

Mr. Ed Coleman, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm and introduced the newest Commissioner Melissa Noel. He also acknowledged Western Maryland economic development partners, Kim Durst, Cheryl DeBerry and Connor Norman of Garrett County and Ashli Workman of Allegany County. He then offered Ms. Noel a few minutes to provide her background. Co-Chair Coleman then introduced Brian Durst of Rocky Gap Casino Resort and thanked him for hosting the meeting.

II. Welcome

Mr. Brian Kurtz, General Manager, Rocky Gap Casino Resort welcomed Commissioners and attendees.

III. Rankings & Research Subcommittee

Ms. Elizabeth Rendón-Sherman, Chair, Rankings and Research Subcommittee provided an update to the Commission on the Rankings Report since the February meeting and noted the online dashboard includes a new tab on population growth and migration by county.

Ms. Rendón-Sherman reported that Maryland has continued to recover:

- Maryland has added 12,300 new jobs over the past three months and the unemployment rate fell to 4.6%.
- The strongest sectors over the last three months have been Retail Trade, which added 4,400 new jobs, Construction, which added 3,300 new jobs, and Accommodation and Food Services which added 2,700 new jobs.
- However, some sectors have shrunk a little. There are 1,300 fewer jobs in Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities and a loss of 1,100 jobs in both Finance as well as Administrative and Support jobs.
- Maryland's performance has been less strong than the country as a whole. The unemployment rate currently ranks 44th and job gains over the past three months ranked 46th.
- However, this growth is not out of line with neighbors. Over the last three months, Virginia had the 37th ranked growth rate, Washington DC had the 50th ranked growth rate, and West Virginia had the 49th ranked growth rate. Pennsylvania did have a faster growth rate (ranked 15th), but their overall performance over the last two years has been worse than Maryland.
- In terms of rankings, we have new items on the scorecard, including:
 - o Maryland's ranking improved on broadband access, bachelor's degree attainment, and the state poverty rate.
 - o Maryland's ranking fell in terms of population growth and average electricity price paid.

Economist Michael Siers answered questions from Commissioners related to broadband.

IV. Department of Commerce Update

Commerce Secretary R. Michael Gill, addressed the Commission and began the Department updates by emphasizing the importance of finishing the administration strong. He reported the State's economy has improved significantly since the beginning of the administration and the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan. He noted the Governor is clearly focused on finishing strong and the importance for the next administration to note the accomplishments and work to take the economy to the next level.

Secretary Gill updated the Commissioners on a recent Team Appreciation Day to emphasize finishing strong and focused. He then gave an update on the Rural 50 Fund to provide \$50 million to the five (5) Rural Regional Councils for significant economic development projects. Applications for the program will be accepted this summer and funding awarded in September, 2022.

Secretary Gill then spoke on the underlying assets of Baltimore and the need to tout successes and assets. He noted the City's brand is tarnished and stressed the importance of alignment of the office of the City, State, and Attorney General to identify what the City wants to be and implement a coordinated effort to build a City that is Clean, Pretty and Safe.

Assistant Secretary Tom Riford continued the Commerce updates by providing the latest strategies of the Maryland Marketing Partnership, that included media mix new creatives, overall performance of the marketing campaign and the new website.

Mr. Jayson Knott, Senior Director, Business Attraction, addressed the Commission and described the latest Business Attractions and Expansion Opportunities. He described the recent wins; existing pipeline; breakdown by region of the number of opportunities, prospective jobs, capital expenditure and opportunities of at least 50 jobs. Mr. Knott emphasized the seven (7) recent announcements of projects since the last meeting, noting that this has been the best year of the Department for business development.

Ms. Jessica Reynolds presented an update on the Department's International Investment and Trade activities. She reviewed strategic initiatives including a new reciprocal soft landing for Maryland businesses abroad, and upcoming live events.

Ms. Jennifer LaHatte then presented a high level overview of the 2022 legislative session. Ms. LaHatte reviewed the changes to the More Jobs for Marylanders Program, internal reporting and the new Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and the Senator George C. Edwards Fund. The Fund will be administered by the Western Maryland Tri-County Council for infrastructure and economic development projects in the form of grants. She then reviewed the Department Budget and noted the influx of funds for specific programs.

Mr. Wade Hearle concluded the Commerce presentation by giving an overview of the three (3) main areas of energy industry trends – Offshore Wind, Battery Technology Cluster and Small Modular Nuclear Reactor Cluster. He noted the potential for significant jobs and business opportunities for offshore wind in particular given the number of components needed in the manufacturing of the wind blades.

Commerce Team answered questions from the Commissioners related to media buy of minority owned businesses; status of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) relocation; international target markets and countries; minority contracting related to offshore wind businesses; and referrals for new business opportunities related to sustainable and renewable materials.

Presentations on file.

V. Review and approval of February 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the February 15, 2022 meeting minutes approved.

VI. Economic Development in Western MD & Emerging Industries

Mr. Al Delia, Vice President for Regional Development & Engagement, Frostburg State University addressed the Commissioners and provided an overview of the economic development partnerships in Western Maryland and his role at the University which was established with special funding from the Governor. He emphasized that various organizations worked in silos and until there was alignment on the goals and vision of Western Maryland, that they finally work together as a team. He provided an overview of the regional development and engagement economic development initiatives underway; funding resources; activity of the Small Business Development Center; the new Regional Science Center/Challenger Center; engagement with the arts for cultural events; and gave examples of successes in working with leaders in Annapolis for funding. Presentation on file.

He then answered questions from the Commissioners.

V. Energy & Economic Development

Mr. Patrick Kelly, Director, Economic Development, FirstEnergy, provided an overview on the Company and its core values. He noted FirstEnergy is one of the largest transmissions systems in the country with over 24,000 miles of lines. He focused on describing the customer centric investments, electric vehicle technology programs, greenhouse gas reduction goals; targeted economic development segments – biopharma, aerospace, agribusiness, distribution and logistics, and data centers. He continued by describing the company’s role in site selection assistance, customized energy plans, and secure transmission. He also reported on the potential for broadband delivery through electric utilities to assist with reaching rural areas; the importance of data centers and the significant impact of Maryland Senate Bill 397-Data Centers Sales Exemption on this industry. He concluded by reporting on an economic development project which they partnered with the Department of Commerce and Frederick County that will jump start a development of data centers. He also presented on a workforce initiative to train transmission engineers.

Mr. Kelly and Mr. Lucas Cade, Senior Economic Development Advisor, FirstEnergy answered questions from the Commissioners.

VII. Good of the Order

No additional information was shared among the Commissioners.

VIII. 2022 Meetings: 8/16/22 – Ocean City Convention Center, 11/15/22 – Annapolis

IX. Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 2:16pm.