

Worcester County Economic Development Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 13, 2019

The Worcester County Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) met on Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at XO Beanery & Bites Coffee Shop, 129 Market Street, Pocomoke, City, MD 21851. Staff present: Kathryn Gordon, Interim Director, Kathy Shubert, Administrative Assistant. EDAB members present: Robert Fisher, John Glorioso, Natoshia Owens, Marc Scher, Ralph Shockley. Guest Steve Habeger from Ocean Pines was also present.

Call to order: Bob Fisher

Minutes: John Glorioso motioned to approve the December 11, 2018 minutes. Ralph Shockley seconded the motion.

Director's Report:

1. STEM Summer Program Update – Kathryn Gordon stated the application process for STEP UP interns with NASA Wallops opened in December, rather than waiting until February like last year. As a result, Fawn Mete reported a very good turnout of early application submissions. The application process for Reach for the Stars STEM Camp and STEM Leadership Cohort opened the beginning of February and ends March 31st. Also new this year, University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) will be housing the students from all three summer programs for one week on their campus, in the Engineering and Aviation Science Department. UMES is very interested in partnering with us where available and helping out with anything else pertaining to the summer camp. The Worcester County Board of Education (WCBOA) offered bus transportation to transport all of the students throughout the county to UMES. There are two different levels for the STEP UP and Reach for the Stars summer camp this year: Level I is for students in middle school who have never attended camp before who are trying to find something new and are interested in robotics and other program activity. Level II is for students in grades 7-8, who have previously participated in camp and already have a focus. Gordon expressed hope that creating the two levels would encourage more Worcester students to participate in the free program. WCED is starting to see the fruits of its labor with Northrop Grumman offering two full time job positions to previous interns who will be graduating in May. Studio Codeworks has also offered a full time job for a Software Developer to a previous intern as well. The local businesses are starting to see the talent and skills of our future workforce.
2. Approved Rezoning of Properties on 589 – Worcester County had a public hearing on properties on Route 589, across from Ocean Downs. Property owners requested rezoning from E-1 (estate) to C-2 (commercial) due to the character change in the neighborhood and the continued development of Route 50/Samuel Bowen Blvd.

3. West Ocean City Empty Restaurant Filled – The vacant Applebee’s in West Ocean City was purchased by Dough Roller and will be another family restaurant location for them. Development in this area is continuing to go forward.
4. Railroad Improvements – Gordon spoke with Cathrin Banks, President of The Maryland and Delaware Railroad Company (MDDE) regarding a colleague inquiring about the line improvements being done. Cathrin informed me that MDDE secured a \$2 million grant from Maryland Department of Transportation for rail improvements that will extend to Snow Hill to prepare for receiving freight shipments to Tyson Foods’ Snow Hill feed mill. The grant will be split into three phases over the next 3 fiscal years. MDDE has committed to match the funding with \$1 million of its own investment in the line. MDDE and Ms. Banks are hopeful the improvements will be completed in time for shipments with Tyson to begin in early March. The shipments would begin around 500 at first and increasing to 1,200 to 1,500 shipments within the next year. Ms. Banks and I also spoke briefly regarding the Excursion Train Project. Ms. Banks discussed MDDE’s agreement to work with a single operator, Robert Frazen with Steam Services of America, exclusively for the next 18-months. Mr. Frazen is a steam locomotive mechanic with plenty of experience with tourist operations. He was the General Manager of the Grand Canyon Railroad and well as the Great Smokey Mountain Railroad, both with significant tourist operations. Mr. Frazen and his wife visited Worcester County in early 2018 and met with town officials from both Snow Hill and Berlin. Gordon and Ms. Banks spoke briefly on the feasibility studies Stone Consulting completed (Phase I and Phase II) that reported a significant economic impact for Worcester County of \$17.5 million (Total Economic Impact – Railroad Operation \$8,440,623 with an incremental job creation of 211 jobs + Total Economic Impact – Visitor Spending Impacts \$9,146,142 with an incremental job creation of 261 jobs).
5. Pocomoke City Route 13 – XO Beanery & Bites Coffee Shop will be opening a restaurant in Pocomoke City called Dockside. It is the former Mallard’s restaurant on the river and will be opening in mid May. Gordon has been in contact with developers that own property on Route 13 and collecting traffic count information in an effort to attract retail businesses to the properties and pad sites that are available in that area.
6. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

https://www.bea.gov/system/files/2018-12/lagdp1218_0.pdf

For the first time, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has released prototype annual gross domestic product data (GDP) for every county in the U.S. from 2012 to 2015. This data allows for the State of Maryland to look into the economy of each county for the first time. This data release provides statistics on categories for private goods-producing industries, private services-providing industries, and government and

government enterprises. The follow information highlights Worcester County REAL GDP data:

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Private Good Producing	\$232,196	\$247,753	\$246,067	\$244,394
Private Service Providing	\$1,495,180	\$1,523,640	\$1,583,504	\$1,641,058
Government	\$282,392	\$288,749	\$282,839	\$280,597
All Industries	\$2,009,769	\$2,060,156	\$2,112,203	\$2,165,954

Maryland Department of Commerce also released the data with just Maryland counties. (see smaller of the two documents I have attached for your convenience.) Maryland Department of Commerce reports that the annual real GDP growth for all counties grew by an annual average of 2.1% (all industries) between 2012 to 2015. When only combining private industries (Goods-producing and Services-providing), the annual average real GDP growth was 2.6%.

The next release of County GDP data is scheduled for December 12, 2019 and will include Local Area Gross Domestic Product through 2018. In the meantime, BEA is requesting feedback and comments on these prototype statistics to assist in improving their quality, reliability, and usefulness. After receiving feedback on these statistics, BEA will finalize its plan for producing county GDP annually. Natoshia Owens asked where Worcester ranked in the state while Gordon reported Worcester County ranked tenth in the state. This data is beneficial to rural jurisdictions such as the Lower Eastern Shore as only major metropolitan areas were included in the past.

BEA will continue providing statistics for all U.S. counties going forward, based on the feedback they receive.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Natoshia Owens and seconded by John Glorioso.

Attachments: [2 Enc: GDP]