

Tri-County Council
For the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Serving Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

Executive Board Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2006

Mike McCready, Chair, called the meeting of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Executive Board to order on Wednesday, January 18, 2006, at the Tri-County Council office in Snow Hill at 6:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Sam Boston and Charles Massey, Somerset County; Chip Dashiell and Marvin Long, Wicomico County; Tom Cetola, Louise Gulyas and Jerry Mason, Worcester County; Renee Stephens, DBED; Mike Pennington and Kristie Eberly, Tri-County Council. A quorum was present.

The following guests were also in attendance: Bob Hawkins, Pocomoke City Council; Beth Whitelock, Jo-Ellen Mason-Foley and Anne Scott, Tri-County Council; Rob Hart, Shore Transit; B.J. Corbin, Lower Shore Workforce Alliance.

On a motion by Mr. Boston, seconded by Mr. Cetola, the minutes of the previous Executive Board meeting of October 6, 2005, were approved as written.

Old Business

LSWA Update

Mr. Corbin distributed and reviewed information on LSWA's anticipated budget and anticipated funding reductions. He also explained what services have already been reduced or cut and what services will be affected by additional funding reductions. One option may be to end the lease on the One Stop Job Market when the current lease is up in three years.

Mr. Corbin reported that WIA funding allocations will be available in March and the LSWA Board will consider options at their April meeting.

Human Resources

Mrs. Whitelock reported that she is starting to review employee insurance benefits for FY06-07 and is expecting about a 15% increase in premiums.

Mrs. Whitelock reported that a training program has been started for Shore Transit drivers. Current staffing levels are good and interviews for summer drivers will be starting soon.

Mrs. Whitelock reported that the annual Tri-County Council employee meeting will be held on Sunday, January 22 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center. All Tri-County Council members are welcome to attend.

Mr. Pennington and Mrs. Whitelock gave an update on the retiree medical plan. Mrs. Whitelock distributed an estimated accrued liability for the retiree medical plan that was compiled by an actuary at our medical insurance broker. The insurance premiums for retirees are paid out of the current year's grants. With an estimated liability of \$325,000 per year the Tri-County Council needs to start thinking about how this liability will be paid each year.

Shore Transit Update

Mr. Hart reported that there are communications problems in some areas of the region with the current radio system. This has become a safety issue for both our drivers and passengers. He is pursuing being added to the counties 800 MHz system.

Mr. Hart reported that MTA is still interested in funding a centralized location for Shore Transit's bus yard and administrative offices. A study has been completed to determine the best locations for this facility. The best areas are in the City of Salisbury, Route 13 south near the Wicomico County/Somerset County line and on the west side of Salisbury. MTA has planning funds available now and construction funds would be available in FY07 if the Tri-County Council decides to move forward with the project.

Mr. Hart reported that they are still having a problem with vandalism on the buses. The damaged seats are a safety hazard and may be used to conceal items. Damaged seats are being replaced with hard plastic seats that can't be cut. They are considering putting cameras on the buses but wireless broadband is needed to connect the system. It would cost approximately \$100,000 for a camera system.

Legislative Reception

Mrs. Gulyas reminded the Executive Board that the Legislative Reception will be held on February 9, 2006, at the Loew's Hotel in Annapolis. This year's exhibitors are the Salisbury Zoo, Beach to Bay Seafood, Salisbury Pewter and Chesapeake Bay Farms who are all home-grown businesses. Matt Cramer's band will be providing the music. She noted that we are still working on being able to serve oyster fritters to the members of the Legislature at lunchtime on February 9.

Legislative Agenda

Mr. Pennington asked the Executive Board to choose the items the Tri-County Council will be supporting during the 2006 legislative session and at the Legislative Reception. Following discussion the following items were chosen:

- Transportation
- Workforce
- Broadband
- Fully fund the Highway User Fund
- Protect aging funding

Foreign Trade Zone Study

Mr. Pennington reported that the completed Foreign Trade Zone Study has been received and distributed the executive summary. There are current no business in the region that would benefit from a foreign trade zone. The study is recommending establishing a foreign trade zone in the region which would be used as a marketing tool to attract businesses that would benefit from it.

Regional Healthcare Committee

Mrs. Gulyas reported that Wor-Wic Community College has signed an agreement with the University of Maryland Dental School start a dental hygienist program on the Eastern Shore. Students would receive most of their training here and only need to go to Baltimore a few times during the semester. The Healthcare Committee is also looking at options to help relieve the shortage of LPNs.

Water & Sewer Committee

Mr. Pennington reported that the Water & Sewer Committee is hosting a conference on Bio-Solids at Salisbury University on January 26th.

GIS Committee

Mr. Pennington reported that the GIS Committee will be meeting in February. The Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) has been very busy with jobs from all areas of the Eastern Shore.

Telecommunications

Mr. Pennington reported that there is \$2 million in the NASA budget for a fiber connection from Wallops Island to Patuxent River Naval Air Station. The Maryland Broadband Cooperative is being formed to oversee the building of the fiber backbone.

CEDS Committee

Mr. Pennington reported that our contractor for the CEDS revision, BEACON, is planning to have a draft to us in February. The CEDS Committee will be meeting after that to review the draft.

Mr. Pennington reported that DBED is requiring that the Tri-County Council pass a resolution approving the grant request for \$25,000 in planning funds from them for the CEDS revision. On a motion from Mr. Dashiell, seconded by Mr. Cetola, the Executive Board unanimously passed a resolution to file an application with DBED for \$25,000 in planning funds for the CEDS revision.

Mr. Pennington reported that he has received a verbal request from the Worcester County NAACP asking that Edward Lee be made a member of the CEDS Committee. Following discussion, the Executive Board denied the Worcester County NAACP's request.

New Business

Mileage Reimbursement Rate

Mrs. Mason-Foley reported the IRS is changing the mileage reimbursement rate from .48 per mile to .445 per mile. She asked the Executive Board if they wanted to reduce the Tri-County Council's reimbursement rate as well. Following discussion, on a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Long, the Executive Board approved, with two votes in opposition, making the mileage reimbursement rate .44 per mile.

Municipal Representative From Wicomico County

Mr. Pennington reported a letter was sent to all the municipalities in the region asking for one representative from each county to serve on the Tri-County Council and he needed to be notified of the selection by November 4. He was contacted by Doug Gosnell from Sharptown stating that he was the representative from Wicomico County for 2006. In December Mayor Tilghman contacted him stating that Salisbury City Councilman Gary Comegys wanted to be Wicomico's representative for 2006. Following discussion, the Executive Board decided that the City of Salisbury had missed the deadline stated in the original letter and therefore Doug Gosnell would be Wicomico's representative for 2006.

Other Business

Mr. Pennington asked the Executive Board if they wanted Tri-County Council meetings scheduled during the MACO conferences. Following discussion, on a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Long, the Executive Board unanimously agreed that no Tri-County Council meetings be scheduled during MACO conferences. The exception is the dinner meeting for all five Maryland Regional Council's members held the evening before the start of the summer MACO conference.

There being no further business, on a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Long, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.