

# **Tri-County Council**

For the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland  
Serving Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

## Executive Board Meeting Minutes April 26, 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, April 26, 2006, at the Ramada Inn in Salisbury at 6:00 p.m.

Members in attendance: Sam Boston and Charles Massey, Somerset County; Marvin Long and Chip Dashiell, Wicomico County; Tom Cetola, Bud Church and Jerry Mason, Worcester County; 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 and Jo-Ellen Mason-Foley, Tri-County Council; Rob Hart, Shore Transit; Melanie Pursel, Lower Shore Workforce Alliance.

On a motion by Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Church, the minutes of the previous Executive Board meeting of March 15, 2006, were approved as written.

### **Old Business**

#### **LSWA Update**

Mrs. Pursel reported that LSWA is expecting budget cuts of about \$280,000 for FY2007. As we have some areas in the region that qualify as areas of substantial unemployment LSWA may receive notification of some additional federal funding after July 1.

Mrs. Pursel noted that LSWA has asked each county for funding. She distributed a handout which explained how the county funds would be used. She noted that WIA youth funds can not be used for students under 18 years of age so some of the county funding would be used for internships and youth career scholarships for students who do not qualify for WIA funds.

Mrs. Pursel reported that Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and partner organizations in the region, including LSWA, have applied for a grant for a mentor program for new nurses.

Mrs. Pursel distributed a copy of the One Stop Job Market newsletter. She also noted that LSWA's CAM charges for the One Stop have decreased as this fee was renegotiated with the partner agencies.

#### **Shore Transit Update**

Mr. Hart reported that a Public Hearing was held today on funding, changes to the Ocean City routes and passenger policy changes. The overcrowding on the Ocean City buses has been helped with the use of larger buses.

Mr. Hart has been working with MTA on plans for a new transit facility. He told MTA that the Tri-County Council has voted to move forward with this plan so MTA will now find a real estate broker to work with the Tri-County Council. MTA has earmarked \$500,000 to \$700,000 to purchase property in the selected areas of Salisbury or Fruitland and are looking for about 4-1/2 acres.

### **Human Resources**

Mrs. Whitelock reported that some employees are abusing the sick leave policy which causes scheduling, shortage of staff and overtime problems for Shore Transit. She is working on a revised sick leave policy which will reward employees for unused sick leave.

Mrs. Whitelock reported that the first quote on the employee medical insurance showed a 58% increase. The increase is large because we are now considered high risk due to the age of our employees and our claims history. She is looking at other options and will have more information at the Tri-County Council meeting in May.

Mrs. Whitelock reported that a change is needed to our policy on eligibility for retiree health benefits. Currently an employee must have 10 years of service to qualify for this benefit. Years of service are based on employment date with the county or state, if they were employed by them before coming to the Tri-County Council. She is recommending changing the eligibility requirement from 10 to 16 years. On a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Long, the Executive Board unanimously voted to change the years of service required to qualify for the retiree health benefit from 10 to 16 years effective July 1, 2006. Our insurance broker is suggesting changing the retirees from being on a medical insurance policy to health saving accounts. She will report further on this at the next Executive Board meeting.

### **Committee Updates**

#### **Water & Sewer Committee**

Mr. Pennington reported that a small group of Water & Sewer Committee members met earlier this week to discuss bio-solids. They are looking at alternative ways of disposing of bio-solids other than putting the sludge in landfills.

#### **CEDS**

Mr. Pennington reported that the CEDS Committee has reviewed the revised CEDS document. Public hearings on the CEDS are scheduled on May 10 in all three counties. The CEDS Committee will meet make any additional changes as a result of the public hearings and approve the final draft on May 11. The final draft will be available about a week after the public hearings and must also be approved by each individual county and the Tri-County Council before it can be submitted to EDA.

### **Regional Healthcare Committee**

Mr. Pennington reported that the Regional Healthcare Committee is supporting the Community Foundation for the Eastern Shore's application for a grant for a nursing mentoring program.

### **Telecommunications**

Mr. Pennington reported that the Governor has not yet signed the Broadband Bill. DBED has granted funds so that a director can be hired for the Maryland Broadband Cooperative (MdBC). He will be meeting with NASA about the release of federal funds for the fiber connection. MdBC is working on applying to EDA for additional funds.

### **New Business**

#### **2006-2007 Budgets**

Mr. Pennington reported that the 2006-2007 budget is down about \$1 million over last year. The budget includes about a 15% increase in health insurance premiums and a 15% increase in the cost of gas over last year. Also included in the fringe benefits is an accrual for retiree benefits as required by GASB35. He also noted that this is a draft budget and that he anticipates some additional changes before the proposed budget is presented to the Tri-County Council at the May meeting.

#### **Taxes Crab and Clam Bake**

Mr. Pennington asked the Executive Board if they would like to partner with Somerset County and Worcester County Economic Developments and DBED for a boat tour of Crisfield and a tent at the Taxes Crab and Clam Bake. Following discussion, the Executive Board decided to have the boat tour and the tent at the Taxes Crab and Clam Bake.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Pennington announced that the Tri-County Council meeting scheduled for May 18 is being moved to May 31 at Nassawango Golf Course.

### **Personnel Matters**

The Executive Board discussed the decisions of the LSWA Executive Committee following the termination of B.J. Corbin.

It was noted that the LSWA Board is an advisory board. The counties, to whom the state grants the workforce funds, are responsible for the funds, what agency they will use to distribute the funds and how the funds are used to serve the region. The LSWA Board is considering leaving the Tri-County Council.

Following discussion, the Executive Board decided to send a letter to the LSWA Board asking them to decide if they want to remain a part of the Tri-County Council or not. Mr. Pennington will ask the Tri-County Council's attorney, Ed Baker, to draft such a letter.

Mr. Pennington asked the Executive Board to approve a pay increase for Melanie Pursel as she will be taking on additional duties as the Interim Director of LSWA. Earlier this year, the LSWA Board approved making her the Assistant Director. Following discussion, on a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Church, the Executive Board unanimously voted to increase Mrs. Pursel pay by 4% effective immediately and by another 4% effective July 1, 2006.

There being no further business, on a motion from Mr. Cetola, seconded by Mr. Boston, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.