

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

Tri-County Council Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2016

John Hall, Chair, called the meeting of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland to order on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, at the Tri-County Council Multi-Purpose Center in Salisbury at 6:05 p.m.

Voting Members in attendance: Jerry Boston and Randy Laird, Somerset County; John Cannon and Bob Culver, Wicomico County; Bud Church, Merrill Lockfaw and Diana Purnell, Worcester County; Dennis Williams, Town of Princess Anne; Laura Mitchell, City of Salisbury;

Non-Voting Members in attendance: Mindie Burgoyne, MD Department of Commerce

Mr. Boston had Mr. Rex Simpkin's proxy. Mr. Laird had Mr. Charles Fisher's proxy.

A quorum was present.

Staff in attendance: Mike Pennington, Kristie Eberly, Brad Bellacicco and John Donegan.

Guests in attendance: James Purnell, Past Worcester County Commissioner; Scott Warner, Mid-Shore Regional Council.

On a motion from Mr. Lockfaw, seconded by Mr. Church, the minutes for the meeting of December 10, 2015, were approved as written.

Old Business

A. Lower Shore Workforce Alliance (LSWA) Update – Milton Morris

Mr. Pennington explained that Mr. Morris was unable to attend due to health reason and he would be reporting for him.

The State of Maryland, with help from our Federal Delegation, was able to get a grant to assist the employees of Labinal who will be losing their jobs by the end of the 2016 due to the company closing their Salisbury location. The grant will extend their unemployment benefits and help them with training programs. These benefits will be provided through the MD Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) not LSWA. Employees will be notified of these programs by mail.

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B. Shore Transit Update – Brad Bellacicco

Due to finances Shore Transit will not be expanding services for summer but will have routes scheduled to get passengers to Ocean City for work. They are also talking to the City of Salisbury about selling bus passes downtown as a convenience for passengers.

Shore Transit currently has 95 employees, 56 of which are drivers. There should be enough drivers on staff to cover the summer hours.

Shore Transit's Free Rides for Veterans program has cost about \$30,000 so far this year. To help support this program, a golf tournament is being held on April 8 at River Run Golf Course.

The planning of Phase 3 of construction, which is connecting to public water and sewer and the installation of the bus wash, continues. There is now an issue with the water and sewer lines crossing the property directly across Route 50 where a Royal Farms is being constructed. The architects are working on a cost effective solution to this issue.

Shore Transit will be receiving the environmental award from the Salisbury Chamber for the use of dual fuel buses.

C. Citizenship Award – John Hall

Mr. Hall and Mr. Church presented the 2015 Citizenship Award to Mr. James Purnell for his community and public service to the region for over 40 years.

New Business

A. FY2017 Draft Budget – John Donegan

Mr. Donegan distributed the first draft of the FY2017 Budget. The budget is based on flat funding as grant amounts have just started coming in. The final budget will be ready for Tri-County Council approval at the June meeting.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – Mike Pennington

Mr. Pennington explained that the CEDS is a requirement of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) which helps to fund the activities of the Tri-County Council. Applications for EDA funding for projects in the region need to be tied to the goals in the CEDS for consideration.

EDA requires that the CEDS Committee update the document annually and do a comprehensive update every 5 years. A comprehensive update was completed in 2015. The CEDS Committee will be working again with BEACON at Salisbury University on the annual update. The CEDS Committee meeting will be scheduled for late April. The updated CEDS will need to be approved by the Tri-County Council.

Other Business

Mr. Warner talked about a concept, F3 Tech, that the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurial Center (ESEC) is developing with the Mid-Shore Regional Council.

Mr. Boston talked about a bill in the General Assembly to help counties when the state purchases land and it is taken off the tax rolls. The bill is not gaining support and may not pass this session. If it does not pass and is submitted next session it may need to be a statewide rural initiative.

Mr. Pennington reported that there is a bill in the General Assembly to have the five rural regional councils covered by the Maryland Tort Claims Act. Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT), which insures the councils, discovered that the regional councils were not covered by the Tort Claims Act and cannot insure us without this protection. The Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) has been assisting the councils and testified in our favor to help us get the bill passed.

There being no further business, on a motion by Mrs. Mitchell, seconded by Mr. Church, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.