

St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission
Commissioner's Meeting Room, Chesapeake Bldg.
41770 Baldrige St., Leonardtown, Maryland
Wednesday, October 15, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The October 15, 2025 Meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 6:00 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Members in attendance were:

Curtis Brown
Kenneth Russell
Brandie Edelen
Dr. Asif U Dowla
Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas
Richard Tarr
Dr. Dale Moore
Leona Charles
Lisa Colavito
Jacob Keller
Mark Robinson

Guests in attendance included:

Kellie Hinkle, Deputy Director, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development
Sydney Garner, Agriculture & Seafood Manager, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development
Lee Greely, Economic Development Specialist, St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development
Liz Mildenstein, Executive Director, Visit St. Mary's MD

Members not in attendance

Dr. Christine Bergmark
Nicholas Hooper
Matthew Burgan

III. Old Business

A. Approval of Minutes

Lisa Colavito motioned to approve the Minutes of the July 23, 2025, seconded by Leona Charles
Yea: Curtis Brown, Kenneth Russell, Brandie Edelen, Dr. Asif U Dowla, Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas, Richard Tarr, Dr. Dale Moore, Leona Charles, Lisa Colavito

IV. Proposed 2026 Meeting Calendar

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Wednesday, October 21, 2026

Curtis Brown motioned to accept the Proposed 2026 Meeting Calendar Dates, seconded by Lisa Colavito.

Yea: Curtis Brown, Kenneth Russell, Brandie Edelen, Dr. Asif U Dowla, Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas, Richard Tarr, Dr. Dale Moore, Leona Charles, Lisa Colavito, Jacob Keller, Mark Robinson

V. Resolution/By-law Updates Discussion

Kellie Hinkle informed the Board that there is no mechanism to add Ex-officio members (designated stakeholders) or have identified sector and targeted industries from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) designated positions appointed as members of the EDC. This prompted a discussion by the Commission as to whether formal changes are needed to the by-laws. The Commission expressed concern over having one industry heavily represented and not including smaller industries. The Commission was also concerned about the number of ex-officio members that could be appointed.

VI. DED Program Updates

A. AeroPark Innovation District

Kellie Hinkle updated the Commission on accomplishments that the Department of Economic Development (DED) has accomplished over the last 5 years within the AeroPark Innovation District as outlined in the Final Report of the AeroPark Innovation District Master Plan. Renovations have been completed to the inside and outside of the airport terminal, which now contains a restaurant and other gathering places to make the airport terminal inviting to people that live and work in the area. The goal is to have the airport terminal be the center of activity of the entire Innovation District. Wayfinding signage has been installed. There are plans in place to construct five additional hangers with runway access on the west end of the property and also construct a punch thru road access to the airport. DED has secured funding to update the AeroPark Innovation District Master Plan but first, a Market Study of the AeroPark Innovation District will be completed to evaluate what we have, what we are planning, and the viability of the private sector going into those spaces. This Market Study will serve as a precursor to the update of the AeroPark Innovation District Master Plan.

DED as well as funding for an implementation plan for the Ferry Study recommendations. St. Mary's County is the only regional area that is moving forward with the implementation of the Ferry Study recommendations.

The Regional Workforce Study work has begun in partnership with Towson University, Calvert County, Charles County, and the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD). Currently the Regional Workforce Study is at step one, which is data collection, but the next steps will include focus groups that the Commission may be asked to partake in.

DED planned and participated in Manufacturing Day earlier in October. Over 110 students visited five St. Mary's County manufacturers including a visit to NAWCAD Webster Outlying Field.

Visit St. Mary's MD has revealed new promotional videos. Ms. Hinkle shared one of the 15 second videos with the Commission.

Ms. Hinkle also shared with the Commission the a document that is submitted to the County Commissioners and County Administrator monthly showcasing DED's measurements of metrics tied to the budget, or efforts and effectiveness of the department. This document also displays economic indicators so that the department can track trends and be proactive in its response. Also provided is a snapshot of stakeholder engagement, meetings and business engagement.

DED will be participating in Economic Development Week. A flyer highlighting activities for Economic Development Week was displayed for the Commission in hopes that they will attend the events.

The DED Director search is on-going; the first round of interviews has been completed. The department is recruiting for an Economic Development Specialist with a focus on marketing and communications.

The Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) Fall Conference will be held in Calvert County this year. The topic is building communities where people want to live and work. St. Mary's County will be represented on a panel entitled building Vibrant Communities to keep and attract talent and the community that will be showcased is Lexington Park. Private sector and stakeholder representation will tell the story of Lexington Park and all of the great work that is being done.

There is still time for individuals to provide comment on the County's Comprehensive Plan Update. This portion of the public input is seeking ideas (providing narrative) versus the previous request that were multiple choice selections.

In January the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the DED Small Business Economic Development Specialist will be presenting a new plan to replace the Southern Maryland Innovates project, a regional effort that suffered due to COVID restrictions. The new effort is a recommendation from the CEDS and will focus on St. Mary's County start-ups and entrepreneurs.

The Barns at New Market Holiday Market Application is open and vendors are being sought.

This spring, DED participated with the Maryland Department of Commerce in the Select USA Summit which attracts foreign direct investment into the United States. A copy of the collateral that was created for this event Highlights manufacturing and aerospace industry was distributed to the Commission.

VI. Sector Updates

Lisa Colavito shared that the College of Southern Maryland Workforce Development and Continuing Education 2026 Registration is now open.

Leona Charles advised that there is an interim Department of Transportation rule out that disproportionately affects women and small business. The comment period is still open. The rationale of the rule is that effective immediately, there is no presumption of disadvantage for race or gender. This could affect our small business greatly. Ms. Charles would also like to have a representative from the Leonardtown Sustainability Committee attend a future Commission Meeting.

Dale Moore updated the Commission that the activities of the Southern Maryland Navy Alliance and the Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission.

Rick Tarr spoke of the federal government shutdown.

Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas questioned if the Historic St. Mary's City Hotel & Conference Center be discussed and how it will relate to the housing challenges for academic staff. Ms. Hinkle responded that the CEDS calls for a county wide comprehensive housing plan that DED is poised to start when the Towson University Workforce Study is completed in hopes that this study provides the data needed.

Dr. Asif U Dowla announced that Dr. Rhonda Phillips is the new President at St. Mary's College of Maryland, her background is community development. A new Strategic Plan will be forthcoming.

Brandie Edelen spoke of the growth of her own small business.

Kenneth Russell stated that he was a home builder and understands the housing concerns. Builders are facing increased costs for labor and materials; this leaves thin margins for affordable and workforce housing.

Curtis Brown updated the Commission on current Leadership Southern Maryland Executive Program and the upcoming Leadership Southern Maryland Emerging Leaders Program (LEAP). Mr. Brown also spoke of the implementation of Agile Framework project management on NAWC WOLF.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Curtis Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Lisa Colavito

Yea: Curtis Brown, Kenneth Russell, Brandie Edelen, Dr. Asif U Dowla, Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas, Richard Tarr, Dr. Dale Moore, Leona Charles, Lisa Colavito, Jacob Keller, Mark Robinson

Minutes taken by Lisa Ledman, DED.

Approved January 21, 2026