

TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR THE LOWER EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND
SERVING SOMERSET, WICOMICO AND WORCESTER COUNTIES

Tri-County Council Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2011

Louise Gulyas, Chair, called the meeting of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland to order on Thursday, June 16, 2011, in the Henson Center at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne at 6:20 p.m.

Voting Members in attendance: Jerry Boston and Craig Mathies, Somerset County Commissioners; Bob Culver and Sheree Sample-Hughes, Wicomico County Council; Rick Pollitt, Wicomico County Executive; Bud Church, James Purnell, Virgil Shockley, Worcester County Commissioners; Delegate Mike McDermott; Delegate Charles Otto; Dennis Williams, Town of Princess Anne Commissioner; Laura Mitchell, Salisbury City Council.

Non-Voting Members in attendance: Cindy Ward, Somerset County; Ted Shea, Wicomico County; Gerald Mason, Worcester County; Renee Stephens, MD Dept of Business and Economic Development.

A quorum was present.

Staff in attendance: Mike Pennington, Kristie Eberly, John Donegan, Riggin Johnson, Kristen Kerchner and Milton Morris.

Guests in attendance: Naimat Mughal, Bloosurf; Pat Mitchell and Tyler Patton, Maryland Broadband Cooperative; John Cannon, Mike Scott, Phil Tilghman and Creig Twilley, PAC14 TV; Scott Warner, Mid-Shore Regional Council.

On a motion from Mr. Boston, seconded by Mr. Shockley, the minutes for the meeting of March 24, 2011, were approved as written.

Public Access Channel Presentation

Mr. Phil Tilghman and Mr. John Cannon explained how PAC14 was formed, what it does and its impact on the community. Cable companies are required by law to offer a public access channel in the communities they serve. It is through proceeds from the cable TV franchise agreements that public access is funded. Currently the City of Salisbury and Wicomico County have agreements with Comcast to broadcast PAC14 in those areas. As other communities in the region are interested in public, education and government broadcasting, PAC14 asked the TCC to form a committee to investigate the viability of a regional public access TV entity.

Mrs. Gulyas thanked them for their informative presentation and that the TCC would take the request under advisement.

Regional Internet Service Presentation

Mr. Naimat Mughal from Bloosurf talked about their acquisition of Lower Shore Broadband and their expansion of this service. They have just added two new towers in the Berlin area and they cover about 40% of the three county region with their 15 current sites. There are several more sites that they hope to have online in the next year. They have formed a partnership with a satellite tv provider and a phone service so that they are now able to offer those services along with internet access in one package.

Maryland Broadband Update

Mr. Pat Mitchell gave an update on the progression of Maryland Broadband Cooperative (MDBC). They just celebrated their 5th anniversary of being in business. They have installed over 525 miles of fiber across the state and have 67 members. They are now delivering lit services on the Eastern Shore and have a connection to Baltimore and Equinix (in Virginia). MDBC was a sub recipient of the \$115 million BTOP grant for the One Maryland Network and they have gotten the broadband mapping and planning grant extended from \$2 million to \$4.7 million.

Old Business

Tri-County Multi-Purpose Center Update

Mr. Donegan reported that construction on Phase 1, which includes all areas of the building not occupied by Shore Transit, is underway. The low bidder for Phase 2, which is the Shore Transit occupied areas of the building, was R.D. Meredith. We are waiting on concurrence from the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) before the bid can be awarded. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) has approved grant funding for the front parking lot.

Mr. Donegan noted that there is only 5,500 sqft of unleased space left in the building.

Shore Transit Update

Mr. Johnson reported that the \$1 Saturdays program, which allows riders to get on any fixed route bus for \$1 on Saturdays, started on June 4. Ridership for Saturday, May 28 was 718, ridership for Saturday, June 4 was 975 and ridership for Saturday June 11 was 1,122.

Mr. Johnson reported that at the end of April, Shore Transit was at 75% of their FY11 budget. Greyhound bus ticket sales are increasing which also increases Shore Transit's revenue.

Mr. Johnson reported that the Wicomico County Council decreased Shore Transit's FY12 funding request by \$100,000. These funds were to be used as match for state funding for routes in the Salisbury area. This means that we will also lose \$100,000 of state funding for a

total reduction of \$200,000. He has made a request of MTA to make a one time exception to June 16, 2011
Tri-County Council Minutes
Page 3

decrease our matching funds by this amount but is doubtful it will be approved. Therefore, services will have to be cut, most likely two routes. He is analyzing the data to determine what routes would make the least impact on our customers. He will present this information to the Shore Transit Advisory Board (STAB) and ask for their recommendations. Their recommendations would then be presented to the Tri-County Council for approval. Any changes to service require that a public hearing be held. Following discussion, Mr. Purnell made a motion to reduce service to compensate for the \$100,000 reduction in funding by Wicomico County, get a recommendation from STAB on where to reduce service, hold a public hearing on the service reduction and report the final recommendations to the Tri-County Council for approval. Mr. Mathies seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed.

New Business

Budget Amendment for FY11

Mr. Pennington explained that the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development's (DBED) grant requires that all budget line items be plus or minus 10% of the budgeted amount. We are making some adjustments to our budget to meet this requirement.

On a motion from Mr. Mathies, seconded by Mr. Purnell, the Tri-County Council unanimously voted to accept the changes to the FY11 DBED budget as presented.

Draft Budget for FY12

Mrs. Kerchner reported that the draft FY12 Budget was included in the meeting packet for review. This is still a draft as the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance (LSWA) and Shore Transit will not find out how much funding they will be receiving until closer to the start of the new fiscal year. The Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) will be reducing the pass-thru grants that we administer for them by \$1 million in FY12.

Tawes Crab and Clam Bake

Mr. Pennington reported that the Tri-County Council is again partnering with Somerset County Economic Development Commission, Worcester County Economic Development, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development and Maryland Broadband for a tent at the Tawes Crab and Clam Bake on July 20 in Crisfield. We have some tickets available, let Mrs. Eberly know if you need one.

Other Business

Mr. Pennington reported that he was asked if the Tri-County Council would be interested in administrating the Local Management Boards (LMB) for the region. After some research he has determined that there is not enough funding in the grants to cover both the staff required for the

programs and the administration of the grants. Therefore, he has declined to accept the grants.
June 16, 2011
Tri-County Council Minutes
Page 4

At this time, Worcester County is planning to make their LMB a part of the health department and Somerset and Wicomico Counties are still determining their course of action.

Mr. Pennington noted that the Tri-County Council is partnering with BEACON at Salisbury University, Wor-Wic Community College and the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce to hold regional visioning sessions. The visioning will help to outline short and long term plans for the region. The first meeting is being planned for late July at Wor-Wic Community College.

Mr. Morris noted that the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) needs two appointments each from Somerset and Wicomico Counties. The state requires that the WIB have at least 51% business representatives. Both counties need to appoint business representatives. The next WIB meeting will be on July 15.

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