

**THE  
CECIL COUNTY  
Chamber of Commerce**

---

**Issues  
for  
Legislative Action  
  
2009**

**THE CECIL COUNTY  
Chamber of Commerce**

233 East Main Street

Elkton, Maryland 21921

410-392-3833 fax: 410-392-6225

[www.cecilchamber.com](http://www.cecilchamber.com) • Email: [info@cecilchamber.com](mailto:info@cecilchamber.com)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Chamber Board of Directors.....	4
Summary Sheet.....	5-8
Membership Survey Data.....	9-10
Policy Statements	
- Economic Development.....	11
- Water and Wastewater Infrastructure .....	11
- Transportation Infrastructure .....	12
- Information Technology Infrastructure .....	13
- Tourism .....	13
- Agriculture .....	14
- Equine Industry .....	14
- Slots in Maryland and Cecil County .....	14-15
- Cecil County Comprehensive Plan.....	16
- BRAC Impact.....	17
- Government Interaction.....	18
- Tax Issues.....	19
- Health Care.....	20
- Costs.....	20
- Mental Health.....	20
- Education.....	21
- Higher Education.....	21
- Pre-K through 12 .....	22
- Environmental Issues.....	24-25
- Government Relations Committee Approval.....	26
- Board of Directors Approval.....	26

## **PREFACE**

*The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Brief for the Maryland General Assembly's 2009 session sets forth the Chamber's position on issues of importance to businesses in Cecil County. The Chamber's mission is to support those matters that allow business and industry to prosper while increasing employment opportunities and building a healthy tax base.*

*It is the policy of the Chamber to consider, endorse and advocate issues that it determines best represent the interests of its Membership.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The process of governing requires an extensive commitment on the part of legislators and the governed to develop and enact reasonable statutes that promote a healthy and safe community in which to live, work, and play. The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce's legislative agenda intends to assert its influence on the legislative process as it relates to the general business climate of Cecil County.

The *Legislative Brief* is developed annually by the Chamber's Government Relations Committee and approved by the Board of Directors. The Government Relations Committee evaluates and researches current issues that have the potential to be, or the Chamber feels need to be, addressed in the next legislative session because of their imminent effect on the viability of business in Cecil County.

The research process includes meeting with Cecil County Commissioners and representatives of the Maryland General Assembly, and a thorough review of relevant issues obtained from the Maryland State Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber utilizes this information to develop a survey that is designed to solicit feedback from its members on current or prospective legislative issues. The survey is disseminated to each member electronically with hard copies available by request.

In addition to the findings of the legislative survey data on the opinion of the Chamber's membership is also gathered from discussion at Chamber events, written communication on issues throughout the research timeline and ongoing dialogue with its members.

This process allows the Chamber to create the *Legislative Brief*. The Chamber recognizes that the statements in the legislative brief may not represent the opinion of individual members and welcomes member suggestions to review relevant issues or legislation not addressed in this brief on a case-by-case basis. Should there be any questions or any other items of interest not covered in this text, please do not hesitate to contact the Government Relations Committee Chairperson or the Chamber's Executive Director.

# The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce

## Board of Directors 2008-09

---

### Board of Directors Executive Committee

President	Renee Quietmeyer	Chesapeake Publishing
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Brian Bolender	URS Corporation
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Brian Byers	Edward Jones Investment
Treasurer	Bob Palsgrove	Peoples Bank of Elkton
Past President	Al Miller	Cecil County Farm Bureau

### Board of Directors

John Betts	York Building Products
Ken Brown	WXCY - FM
Sarah Colenda	Principio Furnace Foundation
Carolyn Crouch	Cecil County Government
John Denver	Delmarva Power
Jeanne Parry	North East Enterprises, LLC
Cathy Parsons	Courtyard Marriot at the University of Delaware
Michael Ratchford	W. L. Gore
Carl Roberts, Ed.D.	Public Schools Superintendents Association of Maryland
Frank Williams, IV	Williams Family Auto Mall
Ingo Zeise	ZCON Safety Consulting

*Executive Director*                      *Laura Mayse*

**The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce**  
**Issues for Legislative Action 2008**  
*Summary*

---

**THE CECIL COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SUPPORTS:**

- **INFRASTRUCTURE -**  
**Water and Wastewater in the Growth Corridor**
  - Support efforts to move forward with implementation of plan with Artesian Water Resources for privatization of services as outlined in recent agreements between Artesian and the county
  - Move forward with growth management tools such as transfer of development rights (TDR's) and adequate public facilities ordinances (APFO's)
  - Encourage county and municipalities to work together in planning and interconnection of water and waste water systems
  
- **INFRASTRUCTURE - Transportation**
  - Improvements to four failing intersections on Route 40 (Routes 222, 272, 279 & 213)
  - Prioritize repair of county bridges consistent with the revision of the Comprehensive Plan
  - Work with State of Delaware to move the Interstate I-95 toll booth at the Tiding's Bridge to the Delaware state line
  - MARC train commuter service to Elkton with a connection to SEPTA in Newark, Delaware
  - Restoration of the \$1.1 billion of transportation improvement funding previously delayed due to budget deficit
  - Direct CIP funds now available as a result of the sale of Elkton West for transportation improvements (roads and bridges) and natural gas infrastructure
  
- **INFRASTRUCTURE – Broadband**
  - Continued funding and partnering with right-of-way and existing public resources of the state of Maryland to make this infrastructure available throughout Cecil County
  - Make broadband accessible to all businesses in Cecil County
  
- **CECIL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**
  - Identify a clear designated growth area to encourage economic development
  - Develop business incentives that promote development within the growth corridor
  - Develop disincentives for development beyond the growth area that limits sprawl
  - Develop a clearly identified policy recommendations that will promote the development of appropriate infrastructure to support business development within the growth area

- **TOURISM**
  - Increase of funding to aggressively promote Cecil County and the State of Maryland as a world-class destination
  
- **AGRICULTURE**
  - Maintain funds in MALPF, Rural Legacy and local land preservation programs
  - Support legislation that makes Maryland and Cecil County agri-tourism more “business friendly”
  - Develop a waste water plan to discharge waste water on agricultural land for the benefits of both parties
  
- **EQUINE INDUSTRY**
  - Develop state funding incentives to keep all equine operations in the county viable
  
- **SLOT MACHINES IN MARYLAND AND CECIL COUNTY**
  - Supported by wide majorities of the Chamber membership for many years.
  - Revenues will support education, reduce state budget deficits, and promote additional economic development.
  - Chamber supports quick decision making for the slots operator in Cecil County, fair revenue sharing, and appropriate zoning approvals.
  
- **BRAC IMPACT**
  - Provide school funding for maintenance and repair as well as support for the Cecil Technical High School and the Bainbridge Campus of Cecil College/UMBC
  - Improve failing Intersections along Route 40 in Cecil County that are a threat to public safety; specifically Route 222, Route 272, Route 279, Route 213.
  - Reinstate rail extension to Wilmington and the reopening of the Elkton Train Station should be in the CTP with accelerated funding.
  - Initiate, at the Congressional level, joint cooperation between Maryland and Delaware on a common toll facility at the state line.
  - Establish support for the LT Governor’s Regional Water Resources Initiative to incentivize cooperation between municipal and county governments to develop joint/cooperative solutions to local water and wastewater needs.
  - Revise state enterprise zone legislation to allow for greater local flexibility in Determining which industry sectors are awarded the EZ Tax Credits and insure a link with local economic development plans
  
- **GOVERNMENT INTERACTION**
  - Continued constructive dialogue and compromise between county commissioners and state legislators
  - Support and encourage cooperation among all of our local governments to insure that issues such as municipal growth boundaries, water and wastewater service needs and rates, and various development polices are put in place

- **TAX ISSUES**

- Encourage legislative action to permit impact fees on new construction
- Run the state of Maryland in a more efficient manner. Consider streamlining the State government and the services it provides to curb costs instead of relying on “revenue enhancements.”
- Simplify the process for new business to apply for tax credits

- **HEALTH CARE**

- Encourage programs geared at prevention and wellness
- Place reasonable limits on malpractice awards
- Legislation that requires insurers to eliminate certain practices that lower physician reimbursement
- The use of incentives to encourage physicians to establish practices in Cecil County
- The creation of a “pay-for-performance” model that rewards providers for good clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction

- **MENTAL HEALTH**

- Encourage public and private awareness of the importance of mental health care
- Support state compliance with HB843/SB447 from the 2006 legislative session to adjust outpatient Medicaid health fees for inflation
- Maintain current level of funding for mental health

- **EDUCATION**

- Higher Education**

- Support Cecil College’s operating budget to hold tuition at affordable rates
- Increased funds for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) programming is imperative

- Pre-K through 12 Education**

- Move forward with the implementation of the cost-of-living factor in FY 2011
- Take no action in the legislature to transfer expenditures traditionally paid for by the state to local governments
- Provide construction funding in FY 2010 for the Cecil Technical High School

- **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

- Ensure that public funding provided to the Chesapeake Foundation is utilized for restoration of the Chesapeake Bay
- Encourage regional green house gases reductions to maintain level competition for the state of Maryland with the regional states
- Encourage the use of alternate energy sources
- Evaluate the implementation of new storm water management policies in balance with impact to the environment and economic development
- Encourage the redevelopment of Brownfield sites
- Discourage the use of the tributary management strategies policy as a growth management tool, and oppose any efforts by state to control the county’s future through the use of this policy

*Environment Issues Con't*

- Encourage defeat of an impervious surface fee, but if enacted in any form consideration should be given to those projects that do not significantly affect the Chesapeake Bay

***Cecil County Chamber of Commerce  
Membership Survey Data  
Issues for Legislative Action  
(For the 2009 General Assembly Session)***

One of the ways the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce speaks out for the legislative interests of its members is through the annual “Legislative Brief”. Each year the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce asks their members to focus their legislative advocacy efforts of the Chamber.

- Respondents said they would favor an extension of the MARC train route with a stop in Elkton and a connection to SEPTA in Newark, Delaware;
- Respondents felt that the state could remedy the current structural deficit and reduced revenues by freezing the state budget at its current levels;
- Respondents were asked to rank the importance of infrastructure issues. The issues, and their order of priority to our Members, are this:
  - #1- Failing intersections and bridges
  - #2- Interstate I-95 toll
  - #3- Water and sewer in the designated growth area
  - #4- Public transportation, including train and bus service
  - #5- high-speed broadband internet service;
- Of those members who responded 53.2% said that they would not be willing to pay higher tolls if the money collected was dedicated to transportation upgrades;
- 57.7% of respondents indicated that they would not support state initiatives to address global climate changes even if it resulted in increased energy prices;
- When asked if the public school system in Cecil County adequately prepares graduates for higher education, 52.2% of the respondents said that they agreed;
- 49.5% of respondents agreed that the public school system in Cecil County adequately prepares graduates for the workforce;
- Respondents support the Cecil County Comprehensive Plan and the current growth corridor;
- Of those members who responded 85.3% believe BRAC (Base Realignment & Closure) represents an economic opportunity for Cecil County;
- Respondents felt that the number of county commissioners should remain as five;

### *Membership Survey Data Con't*

- When asked what form of county government they would support of those who responded:
  - 13.7% said they support commissioner form of government
  - 11.0% said they support code home rule form of government
  - 45.8% said they support charter form of government
  - 29.3% said they were undecided
  
- Respondents said that they would not favor the state shifting teacher pension costs from the state to the counties even if it means higher taxes for the citizens of Cecil County;
  
- Of those who responded 88% said that the county should have control over county planning and land use issues.

# **POLICY STATEMENTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **Infrastructure**

### **Water and Wastewater**

Over the past several years, the Chamber has encouraged the county to move forward with implementing a consistent plan to provide water and wastewater infrastructure in the growth corridor (Interstate I-95 and Route 40). Along with non-aligned growth plans with the three municipalities in this corridor (Elkton, North East, and Perryville), the county had been unable to consistently attract new businesses or focus higher residential development in this corridor.

However, in the past year, the county entered into a franchise agreement to privatize this needed water and wastewater infrastructure in the eastern part of the growth corridor. This agreement with Artesian Water and Wastewater Maryland (Artesian), named Elkton West, will provide much needed public water and wastewater services in the eastern portion of the county's growth corridor. As part of the agreement with the County, Artesian will acquire all of the county's water plant assets and all of the county's wastewater plants with the exception of the Seneca Point facility.

Further, in the western part of the county's growth corridor, Artesian has acquired the Mountain Hill Water Company and now holds the franchise for water service for the bulk of the growth corridor that lies between the towns of North East and Perryville.

This agreement provides numerous other benefits. By privatizing nearly a third of the county's unincorporated areas with an experienced utility company, this area can be provided services in fast, competent, and economical methods that are funded by users only, and not by all the taxpayers of the county. It also allows for under performing plants to be taken out of county control, which will reduce maintenance costs, and allow the Department of Public Works to focus their efforts on the Seneca Point wastewater treatment facility. It also frees up funds from the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for transportation improvements (roads and bridges) and natural gas infrastructure.

In our 2006 membership survey 66% favored having private utility companies providing water and wastewater service throughout the county, while only 17% were opposed. In the 2008 Membership Survey, water and wastewater infrastructure was rated the highest priority (3.6 out of a maximum of 5.0) from our respondents. The Elkton West agreement fits in well with our members concerns.

The Chamber supports all efforts to move forward with an implementation plan providing this infrastructure in order to manage our county's growth, allow other growth management tools such as transfer of development rights (TDR) and Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO's) to succeed, and fulfill the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Chamber also desires that the county and the municipalities work together in the planning and interconnection of each other's systems.

## Transportation

Cecil County continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in Maryland. With this growth, transportation improvements to our roads, mass transit and bridge repair remain a high priority in order to encourage business growth in the county. With declining toll, gas tax and vehicle titling revenues to the state over the last year, funding for transportation improvements to the county and state appear to have little chance for approval in the upcoming fiscal year. The Chamber asked our membership this year to rank in priority (1=lowest; 5=highest) three transportation categories: failing intersections and bridges, public transportation and bus service, and the Interstate I-95 toll at the Susquehanna River

Failing intersections and bridges received a 3.1 rating from our membership. This area continues to be a concern as four intersections on Route 40 (Routes 222, 272, 279, and 213) were designated by the Cecil County BRAC Impact Committee as improvement projects needed for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process to accommodate the expected growth at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Without designated funding now, these key intersections will not be able to accommodate the expected traffic growth due to BRAC by the implementation date of September 2011. The Hatem Bridge repair on Route 40 is progressing on schedule and is slated to be completed in 2010, although the project does not include any additional lanes. County bridge repair continues to be a source of concern to Chamber membership. We continue to ask that upgrading be prioritized in accordance with the county's Comprehensive Plan.

The availability of public transportation and bus service rated a 2.9 from our membership. We further asked the question whether our membership favored or opposed extension of the MARC train commuter service to Elkton with a connection to SEPTA in Newark, Delaware. Our membership supports this extension with a 94% approval rating. Mass transit improvements of this type have to be part of an overall transportation emphasis for the state and county in order to minimize vehicular traffic on Interstate I-95 and Route 40. The Maryland Transit Authority has an Elkton MARC station in its long range planning for 2015, but this will be too late to accommodate growth pressures in the eastern part of the county predicted by BRAC. We ask our public officials to accelerate this infrastructure improvement by 2011/2012 so new residents will have a commuter choice to Aberdeen Proving Grounds and Fort Meade, and give local planning officials a significant assist in focusing growth in this area.

The Interstate I-95 tollbooth issue at the Susquehanna River rated a 2.9 from our membership. With declining revenues at all the Maryland Transportation Authority's tolls state wide due to declining driving habits for Americans conserving fuel, we asked our membership would they be willing to pay higher tolls if the money collected was dedicated to transportation upgrades. Our survey resulted in 30% for this proposal, 53% against and 17% undecided. It is clear that our membership is not confident that any raise in tolls will not be used to fund the structural deficit in the general fund or that any additional revenue would be used to help fund transportation priorities listed above. The Chamber continues to suggest working with the state of Delaware to

move the Interstate I-95 tollbooth to the state line in Delaware as an optimum solution for Cecil County.

The Chamber is also very concerned with the state's budget deficit, that the recent decision to delay \$1.1 Billion of transportation improvements in the region will further hurt business development and exacerbate growth problems due to increased traffic in the near future in this county. The Chamber asks our delegation to make the restoration of this transportation funding a high priority in the upcoming Legislative Session.

### **Information Technology**

An affordable network of broadband access must be part of Cecil County to establish an infrastructure conducive to successful business recruitment and retention. This initiative will help prepare for the future of our youth, business and economic development, and an increase in the percentage of our citizens who both live and work in Cecil County.

Broadband in rural regions of Maryland assists economic development through potential avenues of telemedicine, research and development, and support of workforce skills. The opportunities presented to Cecil County as a rural region of Maryland, situated midway between Baltimore and Philadelphia metropolitan regions, necessitates that an aggressive and proactive initiative to develop vital information technology infrastructure is immediately available within Cecil County, and, especially the designated growth area. This growth corridor between Route 40 and I-95 has already been dubbed the "Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor," in an initiative to attract businesses to the corridor, however, Cecil County is the only participant in this Baltimore, Harford and Cecil alliance to lack sufficient infrastructure to accommodate such a corridor.

During the 2006 Legislative Session, Senate Bill 753 provided multi-year funding into the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund to "assist the establishment of broadband communication services in rural and underserved areas of the state," including an appropriation of at least \$4,000,000 in the fiscal year 2008 budget bill. The Maryland Broadband Cooperative (MDBC) was developed to drive economic development through universal open access to broadband services via a fiber optic network across rural Maryland. However, MDBC representatives indicate the Upper shore region is not even projected to see completion of improvements along the Route 213 area until the end of FY 2009. These improvements along Route 213 will then prompt fiber optic improvements along Route 40, or the growth area currently marked as part of the "Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor." This places Cecil County in an extreme deficit in attracting the type of companies relocating here until its completion. Therefore, we encourage legislative action that promotes faster completion of this initiative.

### **Tourism**

The tourism industry is a critical component of the state's economy. The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce recognizes and supports the need for increased funding of tourism development. The return on tourism funding is evident and fully supported by the facts, which show that an investment in tourism increases tax revenues while building a stronger job market. In Cecil County last year, tourism generated over \$164 million dollars in expenditures from visitors, and

\$8.2 million dollars in county tax receipts. We encourage the aggressive promotion of Cecil County and the state of Maryland as a world-class destination.

### **Agriculture**

Award-winning wines are grown in Cecil County! Dove Valley and Terrapin Station Wineries are 2008 Maryland Governor's Cup Award Winners. The Chamber recognizes this new niche agri-business as another component of our agricultural economy. Tourism revenues will increase as agri-tourism continues to grow in Cecil County as visitors continue to visit not only the new, but existing agri-businesses such as Kilby Cream, Milburn Orchards, and Rumbleway Farm. The business of agriculture is a vital part of the economic well being of Cecil County and the state of Maryland.

The Chamber continues to recognize the value of the rural character of our county. We recommend maintaining funds in the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Rural Legacy, Project Open Space, Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO), and local land preservation programs.

### **Equine Industry**

The Chamber recognizes the economic impact of the horse industry in Cecil County and the State of Maryland. We support a healthy equine industry, which in turn supports local farms and businesses by purchasing products such as hay, straw, tractors, fencing, etc. The horse industry provides numerous employment opportunities that appeal to people of all ages.

Cecil County comprises 222,824 acres. Based on the Maryland Equine Census of 2002, Cecil County had 6,580 horses at 900 locations on 15,300 acres with over 1,580 people involved, excluding hired labor.

Equine activities maintain open space, promote a positive tax base and encourage tourism. We recognize the importance of the equine industry in helping keep agriculture viable and profitable in Cecil County.

We are hopeful that with the passage of the slots referendum and the designation of Cecil County as one of the sites, that a portion of the revenues generated will flow back into the horse industry and make Maryland and Cecil County leaders once again in this industry.

### **Slots in Maryland and Cecil County**

With the recent passage of the referendum amending the state constitution to allow slots (video gaming terminals) in Maryland, the Chamber has seen one of its longest supported initiatives finally come to fruition. Both allowing slots gambling in the state with a location in Cecil County has had wide support from our membership since we first surveyed them in 2004. Passage of this referendum will support funding for state education, and help to defray state budget deficits, which we hope will not allow for any additional tax increases on our members.

The economic impact to Cecil County is significant. A local jurisdiction share of 5.5% has been estimated at \$8-10MM when the gambling facility is operational, projected in late 2011. Development investment of a minimum of \$125MM will help improve the construction industry greatly slowed by the local and nationwide housing decline.

Cecil County will gain significant economic benefits from new jobs created at the slots location, additional jobs created in the local economy, and expenditures in the local area by visitors to the slots location, as well as increased tax revenues from the economic investment. Expanding horse registrations due to the expected higher purses generated from slots revenues will bolster the horse breeding operations throughout this state, and particularly Cecil County. This will help to keep land profitable for agriculture, and less likely to be sold for residential development, helping local and state land preservation efforts. An additional \$100,000 has been designated for purse improvement at the Fair Hill Races, which will support our own Union Hospital.

A location in Perryville, with Penn National Gaming, Inc. as the slots operator, will apply for the Cecil County license. Additional economic development in the form of a tourism center, retail, hotel/conference center, and other entertainment venues will further increase the tax revenues on the land surrounding the proposed gaming facility. This location is optimum for attracting visitors from Pennsylvania and Delaware, and retaining money already gambled in Delaware from Maryland residents. Since this location is near the Interstate I-95 exit at Route 222, it will be a further attraction from travelers outside of the local area.

The Chamber supports the recently initiated impact study from the Cecil County, and expedient selection of the gaming operator for the Cecil County location from the expanded Maryland State Lottery Commission. The Chamber also supports a quick and fair settlement of the local jurisdiction proceeds, and any local zoning changes to be approved, so that the construction and opening of the gaming facility can be done in the fastest time possible.

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON THE CECIL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

In 2007 the Cecil County Board of Commissioner's appointed a Citizen's Oversight Committee (COC) to develop the next Comprehensive Plan. The COC retained the consulting firm Environmental Resource Management (ERM) to assist the committee in writing a plan that is compliant with state regulations as designated in Section 3.05 of Article 66B of Maryland Annotated Code and addresses the critical planning needs of the county for a 20 year timeframe.

Over the past year the COC has examined essential elements that must be considered as the final plan is drafted. Topics that have been addressed include: agriculture/preservation, economic development, housing/recreation, infrastructure, land use, mineral extraction, public services and water resources. The focus of the COC's work has been to consider issues and synthesize difficult challenges that consider the county's capacity to grow in a responsible manner. Additionally, the COC and ERM worked with the Council of Governments and county departments to solicit and integrate feedback from the municipalities with the work advanced by the COC.

The COC is to be commended for the preliminary work that has been completed. The Chamber supports a comprehensive plan that positions Cecil County for responsible growth. In addition, we recommend for consideration that the plan include policy and goals that promote such growth in the following manner:

- A clearly designated growth area to encourage economic development
- Business incentives that promote development within the growth corridor
- Disincentives for inappropriate development beyond the growth area that limits sprawl
- Clearly identified policy recommendations that will promote the development of appropriate infrastructure to support business development within the growth area

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON BRAC IMPACT**

Cecil County Office of Economic Development states that the BRAC priorities of the county for FY09 include:

- School funding for maintenance and repair as well as support for the Cecil Technical High School and the Bainbridge Campus of Cecil College/UMBC is essential.
- Failing Intersections along Route 40 in Cecil County is a threat to public safety. Specifically Route 222, Route 272, Route 279, Route 213.
- Rail extension to Wilmington and the reopening of the Elkton Train Station should be reinstated in the CTP with accelerated funding.
- Talks should be initiated at the Congressional level for joint cooperation between Maryland and Delaware on a common toll facility at the state line.
- Establish support for the LT Governor's Regional Water Resources Initiative to incentivize cooperation between municipal and county governments to develop joint/cooperative solutions to local water and wastewater needs.
- Revise state enterprise zone legislation to allow for greater local flexibility in determining which industry sectors are awarded the EZ Tax Credits and insure a link with local economic development plans.

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT INTERACTION**

The Chamber strongly supports consistent collaboration and cooperation between all levels of government. It is critically important in this most difficult fiscal environment that members of the delegation to Annapolis, the county commissioners and municipal leaders strive to work together to identify and implement solutions that benefit all Cecil citizens. The need for collaborative solutions to resolve the issues the county and its citizens face demand that parochial interests be put aside. The need to resolve current and future infrastructure needs is but one example that supports the Chamber's plea.

We request that the new Board of Cecil County Commissioners provide the necessary leadership to confront this situation and work with all governmental entities to identify and implement solutions that benefit us all.

### **Form of Cecil County Government**

The Chamber strongly endorses the need to change the form of county government. In the 2008 Chamber Legislative Survey only 13.7% of the respondents favor the current form of government. 45.8% favor a move to charter government while 11% favor a Code Home Rule structure. The remaining 29.3% reported that they are *undecided*.

The Chamber asks the Board of Cecil County Commissioners to take the leadership position on this matter including the selection of charter government as the preferred form of government. Appoint a charter committee, and proceed with a process to complete the required components, which includes a process to properly educate Cecil County Citizens prior to their vote.

In addition, we asked our membership whether they supported reducing the amount of county commissioners from five to three in this year's survey. 55.8% of our members do not support this change, as opposed to 34.3% who do support a reduction. This further reinforces our member's beliefs that a change in government form to charter is much more preferable than keeping the current county commission form with only three commissioners.

## POLICY STATEMENT ON TAXATION

- **Impact Fees** – New residential construction typically utilizes a value of Cecil County services greater than their tax input. Though there are property taxes and an excise tax on the property transfer these funds are placed into the general fund. Impact fees are designed to provide revenue for specific services such as schools, police, fire protection, etc. that are not part of Cecil County’s general fund. Past surveys of the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce membership indicated 67% favoring a new tax or fee imposed on residential construction. The Chamber encourages legislative action to permit our commissioners to impose impact fees on new construction.

The Special Taxation District legislation passed last year was a step in the right direction. The Chamber appreciates the work of our delegation in providing that authority to the Cecil County Commissioners.

- **State Taxes** – In the special session of 2007 the state voted to increase several taxes including sales and corporate taxes. Additionally, four new tax brackets were created. According to a report titled, “State Business Tax Climate Index,” dated October 2008 and prepared by the Tax Foundation, Maryland dropped from a ranking of 24 to 45, a precipitous drop. Delaware to our direct east is in the top ten. The other adjacent states are all ranked higher than Maryland. The report goes on to state that “Maryland now has by far the worst personal income tax in the country, with a significantly lower score than second-place California.” The Chamber encourages a roll back of those increases and encourages running the state much like we each run our businesses. When our revenues are down we decrease our expenditures. The current state of the economy is a difficult enough business climate. Let’s create a better business environment to encourage new corporations to move to Maryland and discourage those contemplating moves to more business friendly states.
- **Tax Credits** – New business is a lifeline for the state and other businesses. Maryland needs to encourage new businesses to locate within the state. A sound and viable tax credit program is one tool to facilitate this endeavor. Past surveys of our membership indicates that 79% strongly favor a tax credit program that allows additional economic development in Cecil County. Streamlining existing programs is critical to the long-term success of tax credits and additional economic growth for the state of Maryland.

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON HEALTH CARE**

At the conclusion of the 2008 Legislative Session, special task forces were appointed to assess four key challenges confronting healthcare in Maryland. They are:

1. Rural Physician Shortage Taskforce
2. Governor's Healthcare Access and Reimbursement Taskforce
3. Maryland Healthcare Commission's Taskforce on Mental Health
4. Governor's Quality Council

Reports from these bodies will be available by the end of 2008 and will hopefully trigger further action by the General Assembly.

The issues being reviewed are particularly relevant to Cecil County. The Eastern Shore has one of the worst physician shortages in the state. This directly impacts access to care and hospital emergency department coverage. The use of incentives to encourage physicians to establish practices in the county is being assessed. The Health Access and Reimbursement Taskforce is addressing inequities in physician reimbursement by insurance companies, especially for mental health services. The creation of a "pay-for-performance" model that rewards providers for good clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction will be presented for further legislative discussion.

### **Mental Health Care**

We support and encourage public and private efforts to increase community awareness of the importance of mental health care, which when properly managed reduces costs in other areas of health care and also reduces employer losses due to absenteeism or reduced productivity.

We support state compliance with HB 843 / SB 447 from the 2006 Legislative Session, which directs the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to adjust outpatient Medicaid mental health fees for inflation, as is done in most other areas of healthcare. Such an increase allows our providers to continue to serve our low-income citizens in the community and reduce the need for more intensive and expensive care. We also support legislation that reduces any unnecessary or out-of-date regulatory and administrative burdens on public mental health agencies

We strongly encourage our elected officials to avoid the temptation to cut mental health funding if funding cuts are necessary to balance the budget. While all state services should share in the burden of balancing the budget, community mental health rates went nine (9) years without any rate increases, and in fact had two rate reductions, and are simply not in a position to survive any additional reductions.

# **POLICY STATEMENT ON EDUCATION**

## **Higher Education**

The Cecil County Chamber of Commerce supports Cecil College's higher education initiatives in the following areas:

1. Student affordability must be maintained through support of the operating budget submitted to the county and state. The college's goal is to hold tuition steady for as long as feasible; however, this possibility is dismal in light of continued action being considered to reduce the state and county budget deficit. The state of Maryland continues to earn an "F" grade for affordability and an "A" for the benefits realized from residents with increased educational capital in the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's *National Report Card on Higher Education*. Investment in higher education at the state and local level is the only way to advance Cecil County in perpetuity. Cecil College produces educated individuals who are more likely to participate in civic initiatives, including voting and volunteering as well as contribute financially and philanthropically, all of which increase the quality of life in Cecil County.
2. Increased science, technology, and engineering programming is imperative in order to support the rapid expansion of knowledge economy jobs in our area. In order to offer Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) related classes at Cecil's existing campuses, the college needs funding to be able to provide labs and classrooms that meet the clearly identified STEM mandates. Funding and support is also needed for the College's Bainbridge site, which will meet the physical needs and enrollment demands of STEM courses as well as provide a location for the college's partnership with a four-year institution providing bachelor and advanced STEM-related degrees. Additionally, Cecil College is committed to continuing to champion the need to integrate science, technology, engineering, and math as crucial career pathways in the K-16 educational pipeline, and requests support from elected officials to accomplish this important mission.

Cecil College continues to be the fastest growing community college in Maryland and one of the strongest regional assets supporting workforce development. The college offers more than 90 degree and certificate programs, including local access to four-year and graduate degrees as a result of partnerships with Maryland institutions such as the University of Maryland Baltimore County and Salisbury University. These collective higher education opportunities allow students to develop professional skills which affect positive outcomes in the workplace, and in so doing strengthen the county. Cecil College will continue to pursue relationships with institutions that allow Cecil County student's to earn bachelor and graduate degrees or the majority of credits towards those degrees through on-line, blended, and traditional credit programs all within the county boundaries. As the college's enrollment continues to climb so will its need for resources that address the demands on all aspects of Cecil College's capacity.

## **Pre-K through 12 Education**

### **Cecil County Public Schools – Grades Pre-kindergarten through Twelve**

The Chamber members recognize that a high quality education program for our youth is a critical infrastructure component of the economic development program. They want the best possible education for our young people with the assumption that expenditures are managed in an efficient manner with respect to available fiscal resources.

### **Adequate Funding – Bridge to Excellence**

Bridge to Excellence, also known as “Thornton,” was passed by the legislature in 2002 and signed into law. This legislation was designed to increase the level of state and local funding for public education significantly over five years. The result of a very thorough study by a task force created by legislation indicated that public schools were not funded at a level that allowed all of the students in Maryland access to an adequate education. The funding formulas that distribute state dollars are sensitive to the equity issues in Cecil County because of our low-wealth standing. The Chamber appreciates the fact that Maryland legislators fully supported the five-year phase in of Thornton.

During the 2007 Special Legislative Session the Maryland General Assembly voted to delay the implementation of the *implicit price deflator* (cost of living factor) and replace it with a minimum 1% increase guarantee for all local school systems if the current formulas did not calculate a larger increase from one fiscal year to the next. In addition the general assembly determined that the cost-of-living index factor would be either the *consumer price index* or the *implicit price deflator* which ever is less and capped the total increase to no more than 5%. While the Chamber understands the fiscal crisis facing Maryland, the general assembly and the governor need to move forward with the implementation of the cost-of-living factor as schedule (d) in FY 2011.

In addition the Chamber asks that the governor or general assembly not take action to transfer expenditures traditionally paid for by the state to local governments. Local governments are also dealing with the impact of the current fiscal crisis and will be hard pressed to address local fiscal priorities given the current circumstances without absorbing costs currently covered by the state. Local governments cover about 50% of the costs of public schools in each jurisdiction. The ability of the local government to fund the priorities of local education at a time when the state funding is not increasing is critically important.

### **Cecil Technical High School**

The Chamber supports the Board of Education’s proposal to build a new comprehensive high school, grades 9-12, for *career and technology* education programs. The Board of Public Works approved this project in May 2007. The Board of Education of Cecil County will be requesting construction funding for FY 2010. The Chamber has identified the construction of the Cecil Technical High School as a critical component of the education infrastructure in Cecil County.

Tomorrow's workforce must possess more knowledge and greater skill if Cecil County is going to be prepared to fulfill the economic development challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) decision as well as population growth projections fully indicate the need for increased classroom space and highly trained graduates prepared to fill workforce needs.

## POLICY STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Cecil County enjoys a rural character with access to major water bodies. Our natural features are a source of the quality of life for our citizens and a large tourism draw. As the “Head of the Bay” we are concerned with the long-term stability and vigor of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and encourage efforts to improve their quality. Many Cecil County residents and businesses depend on the Chesapeake Bay for their livelihood. We, as its stewards, would be remiss in neglecting this national treasure.

However, restoring the Chesapeake Bay comes with significant costs that, in the opinion of the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce, must be weighed against the benefit gained. Items of concern considered of importance by the Chamber include:

- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation Oversight** – There are many examples throughout the country of private non-profits inefficiently utilizing public funding provided to them. Though we believe the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to be admirable we are concerned that the Foundation is inefficient in the use of the public funding provided to them. It is the Chamber’s position that government oversight should be provided to ensure that the provided public funding is utilized as it is intended, to facilitate the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Greenhouse Gases** – A 25% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020 and a goal of 90% reduction of year 2006 greenhouse gases by 2050 is a worthy goal. However, to do so without other regional states doing so will put industries within the state of Maryland at a competitive disadvantage. The Chamber encourages a regional effort so that we are all on equal and competitive footing.
- **Alternate Energy Sources** – In this time of excessive costs for energy and the concern for greenhouse gases the Chamber encourages the state to incentivize use of alternate energy sources (e.g., solar power, wind energy, geothermal, etc.).
- **Stormwater Management** – The Maryland Department of Environment is currently establishing stricter rules for the management of stormwater associated with new construction or redevelopment. The goal of these rules is to further reduce the amount of runoff by volume controls (instead of just the peak flow rate control of the previous rules) and increase in stormwater quality through the use of green technology best management practices (GTBMPs). As indicated previously the Chamber encourages efforts to restore the vitality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. However, we are concerned with the impact on a property owner’s ability to develop their property. We are also concerned with the long-term cost of maintenance of the GTBMPs and who bears those costs (Will it be a new “tax” to cover those maintenance costs? Will a homeowners association be responsible for that maintenance when they have no expertise?). It is the opinion of the Chamber that these issues should be examined closely before implementing the proposed changes.

- **Brownfields** – There are many underutilized and dilapidated sites throughout the State of Maryland. The Chamber encourages the state to develop enhanced programs to incentivize development of Brownfield sites to include; 1) Protecting the new owner against liabilities that may arise out of the site’s previous uses and 2) Grants to at least partially cover the costs of environmental cleanup.
- **Tributary Management Strategies** – Of much farther-reaching impact on the economy of Cecil County is the tributary management strategies policy enacted through a joint effort of the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Planning. Although still in the formative stages of development within the county, the basic parameters of the strategy will affect virtually everyone and everything within the county. The standards established will place controls on new and proposed sewage treatment plants, as well as all on-lot septic systems, which is still the primary means of sewage treatment within Cecil County. If standards are not being met in the various tributaries then more progressively technical systems will be required to control effluent. The additional costs for such systems may limit economic expansion. Construction of both residential and commercial facilities will be curtailed until such time as the tributary is brought back into compliance. We strongly encourage our local, county and state officials to thoroughly review this issue and develop policies and procedures that enable controlled growth to continue while also meeting the goals of the tributary management strategies. This is especially imperative in light of BRAC and the impending growth potential this brings to the county. We firmly disagree with the use of the strategy as a growth management tool and oppose any efforts by the state to control the county’s future through the use of this new policy; and
- **Impervious Coverage Fees** – A fee based on impervious coverage was considered in the last session and will likely be re-introduced this coming session as a means to generate revenue to mitigate storm water impacts to the Bay. The fees may be distributed to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to provide funding to local governments for storm water management projects, urban tree plantings, stream restoration projects and for construction of natural filters such as oyster restoration, forest protection and wetland restoration. The MDA will utilize funds for implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Other jurisdictions throughout the country have utilized this methodology to generate income for storm water utilities. While the Chamber considers mitigating storm water problems and cleanup of the Bay important goals we do request that the economic impact be considered. We are aware of jurisdictions that base their fees on erroneous impervious coverage acreage resulting in excessive fees. Consideration should also be given to those more recent projects that by following state law do not contribute to storm water problems. They already are required to manage both quantity and quality of the storm water leaving their post-developed site. It is the opinion of the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce that these sites be exempt from such a fee. By constructing on-site storm water management measures they have already paid their fair share.

**Written, drafted and approved by the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce  
Government Relations Committee**

**Joyce Bowsbey, Chairperson  
Laura Mayse, Executive Director**

*Approved by the Cecil County Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors  
December 2008*

**Renee Quietmeyer, President**