

MINUTES
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
January 8, 2026

The meeting of the Economic and Community Development Commission was called to order on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 5:00 at the Bel Air Armory conference room, 37 N Main St, Bel Air, MD 21014.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Boyle
Donna Dickey
Gil Kennedy

IN ATTENDANCE: Catherine Butrim, Economic Development Coordinator
Jakob Taylor, Town Commissioner
Raj Goel, Deputy Director Harford County Economic Development
Jenny Erhard, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Nicole Ribakow, Recording Secretary

I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – November 2025

Mr. Kennedy called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. There was not a quorum, so the minutes will be approved at the meeting in February.

B. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2026

The group discussed possible nominations. Mr. Boyle said he would consider the position of Vice Chair. Ms. Dickey suggested Mr. Kennedy serve as chair. Mr. Kennedy advised that he would consider serving as chair in 2026.

II. TOWN UPDATES

A. Economic Development Department

Ms. Butrim reported on the following updates:

U&Os Received:

- Bounds Accounting & Tax Services – 102 Powell Avenue
- Marathon Health – 620 W. MacPhail Road
- THB Bagelry & Deli will be opening at the Shops at Harford Mall. They have not yet received their U&O.

Ribbon Cuttings:

- Harford Chamber hosted a ribbon cutting for Homeward Bound Veterinary Services Urgent Care on December 4.

Closings:

- Full Heart Solutions – 107 S. Main Street – limited hours this week and moving forward
- Doggilicious Doughnuts – 100 S. Main Street
- Little Haven on Main – 22 S. Main Street – limited hours moving forward
- Lane Bryant announced they will be closing at Harford Mall on January 17.

General:

- AfroKouture was selected as the Armory Marketplace tenant in Suite 105. The shop occupied the space as a pop-up October – December.
- Applications for Suite 103 are in review.
- Harford Home Interiors is looking for an office space in town.
- 39 Town businesses were recognized in 43 categories of the Baltimore Sun's Best of Harford Awards. Congratulatory letters were sent to all winning Town businesses.
- Economic Development is currently running a social media ad campaign promoting winter shopping, dining, and services. Print ads promoting shopping and dining and services are running in the January issue of *Harco City Lifestyle* and the February/March issue of *Harford's Heart*.
- The Town Commissioners have appointed Kristien Foss to fill the seat vacated by Commissioner Jim Rutledge in October.
- Fox 45 featured Bel Air's A&E District live at Armory Marketplace for their Hometown Spotlight this morning.
- Harford County Restaurant Week will be held January 16-25. Menus are on the Visit Harford website.

B. Planning Department

Ms. Butrim provided the following information on behalf of Planning Director Kevin Small:

- The Planning Commission will be reviewing the site plan and landscape plan for a proposed two-story addition at 604 Moores Mill Road for JS Medical Billing.
- The Planning Commission will be reviewing the special development site plan and landscape plan for two pad sites for Phase Four at the Harford Mall.
- The Planning Commission will also be discussing Ordinance 851-25, which proposes amendments to the development regulations for cannabis and related uses. In

preparation for this, the planning staff has reviewed how different jurisdictions are regulating development around cannabis businesses.

- Mr. Small provided a draft of the ordinance dated December 15 and an alternative draft based on research regarding other jurisdictions' regulations. Both draft ordinances are expected to be discussed with the Planning Commission during tonight's meeting.

III. ORGANIZATION UPDATES

A. Harford County Office of Economic Development

Mr. Goel shared an update on the following:

- Business Information Series
 - The latest session is taking place tonight at the Converge Innovation Center and focuses on financial issues specific to startups. The next installment is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, and will cover state and county government contracting opportunities. The session will guide businesses on identifying these opportunities, understanding procurement processes, and learning how to navigate them more effectively. Members are encouraged to share this information with local businesses that might benefit from attending.
- Upcoming Addresses by the County Executive
 - The county executive is scheduled to deliver the State of the County address to the County Council next Tuesday. Additionally, the State of the Economy address hosted by the Harford County Chamber of Commerce will be held on Thursday, February 22. The address will provide valuable insights and updates regarding county affairs, with an emphasis on economic development.
- Federal Reserve Site Visit
 - A governor from the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will be conducting a site visit in Harford County on February 26. The visit will include stops in Bel Air and will involve local leadership. The purpose is to engage in discussions and gather in-depth knowledge about the county and its jurisdictions, offering a unique opportunity for local stakeholders to interact with a key federal policy maker.
- Economic Development
 - The Battelle Building was recently purchased by Lufco, a company with a strong focus on government contracting. Lufco plans to significantly expand operations, by adding primarily engineers and other high-technical positions. Mr. Goel has been working closely with local colleges and universities to attract talent to fill these roles.
 - Mr. Goel noted continued revitalization activities along the Route 40 corridor, which are beginning to yield positive results.

B. Bel Air Downtown Alliance (BADA)

Ms. Erhard shared an update on the following:

- An overview of activities in 2025 was distributed. Ms. Erhard advised that BADA currently is initiating discussions with sponsors for annual events, including the Main Street Social event series and the Chocolate, Brew & Wine Tour, which will be the first major event downtown on the first Saturday in March. In addition, BADA is actively engaged in grant management and is closing out several large grants, such as Project Restore and Strategic Demolition.
- BADA has been supporting businesses impacted by the utility pole fire that occurred on New Year's Eve. Eight businesses were negatively affected due to an error in the installation of gas and electrical lines by the BG&E contractor. This resulted in a fire when an electrical short burned through the protective casing and reached a gas line. BADA is assisting these businesses with filing claims.
- The utility pole fire prompted Town officials, emergency services, and local partners to review and improve protocols for emergency responses as the outage extended beyond Bel Air, affecting Elkton due to reliance on shared servers.

Ms. Butrim advised that Town Administrator Eddie Hopkins welcomes any feedback or concerns regarding the utility pole fire. She advised that the ECDC members should contact Mr. Hopkins directly.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Ordinance 851-25 Cannabis Legislation

The members present reviewed Ordinance 851-25, which updates local cannabis laws to align regulation of cannabis retailers with that of alcohol. Commissioner Taylor highlighted concerns about setbacks around sensitive areas and clarified that the term "tavern" refers to any public alcohol retailer. The Town Commissioners assured via social media that new or expanding taverns would not be restricted. The existing grandfather clause protects current uses, but its coverage may not meet all of Bel Air's needs.

Ms. Dickey inquired about property lines, and Commissioner Taylor clarified that setback requirements operate property line to property line. Without the grandfather clause, some businesses near churches and schools could face issues. Setbacks from sensitive areas, such as homes and schools were discussed, with a preference for property-line measurements. The proposed ordinance specifies 300-foot setbacks from schools and 100 feet from residences for cannabis businesses, which may be challenging due to Bel Air's layout. Dispensaries must also be at least half a mile apart to prevent clustering. There was concern about how these regulations could affect business development. Commissioner Taylor stressed he would oppose rules harming restaurants.

The group also discussed difficulties in acquiring cannabis licenses, increases in setback distances, and differences between liquor stores and dispensaries. Ms. Erhard noted challenges in regulating overserving and safety concerns. Commissioner Taylor said the Commissioners aim not to hinder restaurants and emphasized keeping stakeholders, such as ECDC, informed. The ordinance was introduced in December with a public hearing scheduled for January 20 and passage expected by mid-March.

V. OTHER

A. Miscellaneous/Open Discussion

Commissioner Taylor advised that the commissioners are actively being briefed by Lisa Moody, the finance team, and other stakeholders about parking issues. Several ideas were proposed to transform the parking garage into an engaging space including illuminated walkways or mini murals throughout the garage. Ms. Erhard discussed initiatives to enhance the safety of the upper levels of the garage without compromising aesthetics, such as installing lattice work with climbing plants between levels.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was concluded at 5:56 PM.