

**HARFORD COUNTY**  
**CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**ON CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**October 14, 2025**

**8:30-10:00 a.m.**

**Attendees:** Joe Connolly, Jeanne Donlick, Matt Johnstone, Rob Limpert, Erin Mock, Andrew Thomson, Katie Eckstein, Savannah Feist, Mary Beth Stapleton, Charlene Chester Jerome, Rajiv Goel, Matthew Gullion, Joshua Oltarzewski, Joni Poust, Sara Saacks, Terrell Williams, and Kelly Zajicek

**HCPS Updates:** Mr. Connolly began the meeting at 8:20 AM and had each attendee give their name and background. After attendees were given time to review the minutes from the prior meeting, he asked for approval of the minutes. Ms. Feist motioned, and Mr. Limpert seconded. For this meeting's agenda, Ms. Feist motioned, and Mr. Limpert seconded.

Mr. Connolly discussed the purpose of committee, as well as our county's SMARTIE goals submitted to MSDE, which include providing options for students in magnet and signature programs to earn industry-recognized credentials. We currently have 70 students in internships and over 300 in apprenticeships.

MSDE requires us to review our programs in-depth and complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment every two years; we are up for renewal this year, which will take place in February or March 2026. This involves reviewing student data and local workforce needs and setting new goals based on the data findings and needs of the community.

Students earned approximately 3,000 industry-recognized credentials in certifications such as Six Sigma, Erosion & Sediment Control, etc. This year, we have OSHA-30 as an option for students in Advanced Tech courses. Mr. Connolly and Mrs. Saacs met with high school SPA teams over the summer, discussing data on how many students earned their CTE completer, as well as sharing the vision for the IRCs given to each program. 100% of Harford Tech seniors earned their CTE completers last year.

About 70 students are currently participating in HYWI in Microsoft Certification, Windows Support, Construction, Logistics, Communications, Dental Assistant, and EMT programs. In the spring, we will have 16 CNA and 2 Dental Assistant students participating, thanks to partnerships with HCC, Susquehanna Workforce Network, and Harford County Government.

Mr. Goel asked if statistics are kept on how many students enter further schooling or careers related to their CTE completer field. Mr. Connolly replied that it is hard to track after students graduate; there is no system or platform to monitor and log this. MSDE tried to gather this data, however, the survey given to seniors last spring did not receive the participation needed to provide valuable data. Mrs. Donlick suggested school-specific edits to the senior exit survey in the future to gain further data.

Mr. Connolly explained that the CTE office begins working with students at the middle school level: career coaches provided by SWN work with students through the counseling office; middle school innovation provides choices for students' courses (computer science, engineering, interactive media); the Career Compass course allows students to explore their strengths and interests. He also shared about a new program, Launch: a 6-year program working with counselors to help students find their strengths and determine which magnet or signature programs interest them, including job shadowing, dual enrollment, AP courses, etc. The advisory program is incorporating lessons on financial literacy this year.

Mrs. Poust shared that she and another teacher from Bel Air High School brought middle schoolers to the high school where they were able to sit in on classes with high school students. She saw excitement in the students and said that they can now visualize what their classes will be like as they prepare to move to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Mrs. Saacs said that this is a main focus of SPA work in all schools this year, especially the connection between feeder schools: Elementary- Career Mindset, Middle- Career Preparation, High- Graduate Outcomes.

As part of giving students more choice regarding magnet programs, Mr. Connolly shared that they now have multiple essay options when applying, and there will be no January testing for the programs. Next year, an Early College program will be launched at Swan Creek, where students will earn a general AA degree; this is our third early college program. There is no current seat cap; the application window will open in December, after the regular magnet program window closes, and decisions will be made in March. A teacher specialist will be hired for this program. The four strands of focus are Data Science, Business Administration, Accounting, and Psychology.

The Perkins award was approximately \$30,000 less than last year. Teacher equipment requests must align with SMARTIE goals to meet related needs. HCPS was one of only two or three school systems to receive the Perkins Reserve grant, which has a focus on expanding registered apprenticeships this year. The number of defense interns will increase from 4 to 12 students. Mr. Johnstone shared that one of the businesses joining the expansion is based in Florida and fully virtual. The registered apprenticeship is a school-to-apprenticeship model, where students obtain at least 250 hours of related work experience during their senior year, earning their remaining hours during the summer after graduation and during their first year of college or work.

Mr. Johnstone went over a graph showing the rapid growth of apprenticeships starting in the fall of 2022 through the start of this year. Last school year ended with 332 students in apprenticeships, and this year started with 182 between carryovers from last year and new opportunities established over the summer.

He also discussed recent events for students, including a construction career day at M&T Bank Stadium and the union trades career fair in Sparrows Point, with upcoming opportunities such as a trades and manufacturing fair later this month offered in conjunction with Harford County Economic Development. A career fair will be held in March to reach current juniors and seniors.

Mr. Johnstone introduced the Career Navigator team (formerly Apprenticeship Specialists), which previously included Mrs. Poust, and thanked her for her years of service to our students. He also explained that their role includes coordinating with businesses to obtain apprenticeship opportunities, as well as providing related lessons in the classroom.

Mrs. Mock provided an update on the Harford Tech renovations, and shared that welding and CAMM received updated spaces, which are still in the process of getting equipment up and running. The welding students will be partnering with North Harford High to get their cow gates re-welded, which will save North Harford money. The Sports Medicine space is renovated with all new, state-of-the-art equipment, including weights and beds. CADD has all new desks for their design work and instruction. Thanks to Mrs. Donlick, the culinary department can work on cooking and cutting in a classroom at HCC. The restaurant likely won't open until January, and they are hopeful the cafeteria will reopen before winter break. The next phase will be renovating the administrative and counseling offices, which should be completed by the beginning of next school year, in addition to the Cosmetology area (this will begin renovation when the school year ends).

Ms. Zajicek provided updates on HCC; their dog grooming program now has national certification, in partnership with Groom Curriculum Company. It entails classroom time on the LMS which students complete asynchronously, as well as 180 hours hands-on in the laboratory. HCC offers this as a day and evening course, with six individuals enrolled in each. Daytime courses are now being offered at the Workforce Center at Water's Edge, including Arc Welding Fundamentals and Cybersecurity Plus; they are hoping to start a Certified Logistics course in November. They are renovating to expand from 8 to 10 welding booths and be able to cut metal in the labs. Spring open enrollment begins October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Eckstein asked the committee to examine an updated Program of Study sample piece. MSDE is moving to a "curriculum agnostic" model, where there are standards each system must follow, and they may use any curriculum provider they choose to meet those standards. The Accounting and Financial Services study piece focuses on Real Estate and Insurance, rather than Managerial Accounting, which may not align with the coursework students will then encounter at the college level. She also asked them to compare the HCPS and HCC calendars from the CTE lens considering our goals and the challenges of increasing apprenticeships and dual enrollment opportunities. For example, 100% of a student's grade in dual enrollment comes from their HCC work, but there are significant gaps between course start and end times between the two schools.

Mr. Johnstone shared that we do not have a clear definition of "Career-Connected Learning" from MSDE yet, but that information should be available before the next meeting.

Mr. Gullion explained that, in his youth ministry work, he and others have developed an advanced business leadership training as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade on developing a board, various executive roles, starting a business and non-profit, and the difference between them. He also asked if HCC had advisory positions for students to work under professors, which the committee leaders agreed would be worth looking into.

Committee members were asked to divide into two groups, each one tackling one of the topics. After 40 minutes of discussion time, attendees were asked to return their completed work sheets and were thanked for their participation. The meeting then adjourned.