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Friday, Sept. 4, 2009

NewsWatch: State cuts tourism, nanobitech programs

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Budget cuts approved recently by the Maryland Board of Public Works for the 2010 fiscal year included \$500,000 in reduced funding for marketing grants for local tourism offices and a \$250,000 grant for nanobiotechnology development for the University of Maryland.

The programs operate out of the state Department of Business and Economic Development. Other cuts included a \$64,500 reduction in funding for foreign offices. However, the cuts did not result in any positions being cut, unlike in numerous other departments.

"Lingering structural issues" make it likely that further budget cuts could be in the works in the near future, Donald Fry, CEO of the Greater Baltimore Committee, said in an e-mailed newsletter to members this week.

Giant to close seven Starbucks kiosks in state

Giant Food of Landover will be closing 17 of its in-store Starbucks Coffee Co. kiosks, including seven in Maryland.

"This was a joint business decision between Giant and Starbucks. After careful review — looking at our joint operations and for ways to operate our businesses as efficiently as possible, we decided that these stores were not performing at acceptable levels that would allow them to continue operating," Kim Brown, spokesperson for Giant, said in an e-mail.

Giant and Starbucks of Seattle, Wash. have worked together since 2000 and will continue to do so through the 20 remaining kiosks. Employees from the closing kiosks will be offered jobs in other Giant positions, Brown said, emphasizing the closures will result in no layoffs.

Van Houtte automated coffee kiosks will replace the closing Starbucks. Free coffee will also be available at these spots for their first week of operation.

Starbucks has closed more than 900 stores within the last two years and has plans to close another 200, according to company information.

BAE Systems lands \$30.2M Navy contract

BAE Systems Technology Solutions & Services of Rockville was awarded a contract for \$30.2 million by the U.S. Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division in St. Inigoes.

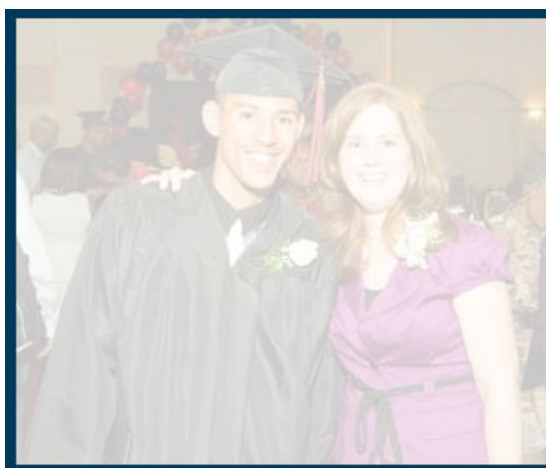
The contract is for, "technical services and supplies for the rapid design, development, customization, manufacturing, fabrication, integration, test and evaluation, installation, certification, maintenance and upgrade, logistics and life cycle support of new and/or existing communication-electronic platform, equipment, systems and subsystems in support of the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Special Communications Requirements Division," according to federal contract information.

Eldersburg company bought for \$16.25M

Intelligence firm Applied Signal Technology of Sunnyvale, Calif., has acquired Pyxis Engineering of Eldersburg, a privately held company that specializes in systems engineering, software engineering and application architecture, for \$16.25 million.

Pyxis had revenues of about \$14 million through the 12 months ending July 31, according to AST information.

Radio One gives raise to division exec



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Media giant Radio One, which reported better earnings in its most recent earnings results, has renewed the contract of Barry A. Mayo, president of the radio division for the next two years and 10 months, promising him a \$550,000 salary for next year.

The Lanham company agreed to pay Mayo a \$500,000 salary through Dec. 31, which may also be reduced up to 7 percent depending on market conditions, according to company information filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Mayo's salary will increase to \$550,000 in January, with the potential for annual pay increases of 3 percent.

While Radio One has reported better earnings recently, the company still has to address comments the SEC made regarding its 2008 annual report, its first-quarter report and its preliminary proxy statement. The company also has delayed its annual shareholders meeting, which was originally set for Sept. 17.

Safeway starts new low-price program

Safeway, which has its Eastern Division headquarters in Lanham, has implemented a new price reduction program, including at the company's 76 Maryland stores.

The lower prices are in addition to the grocer's weekly Club Card savings program, in which participants get reductions. "Safeway continues to adjust prices to meet the needs of our shoppers. This is something they value given today's economic challenges," said Steve Neibergall, president of the grocer's Eastern Division.

Safeway places redesigned yellow tags showing customers the new price and Club Card price, with the old price crossed out.

Intellectual property legal resource center moves to College Park

The Maryland Intellectual Property Legal Resource Center, which offers free legal services on intellectual property to entrepreneurs and startup companies, has moved to College Park.

This center is a joint initiative of the University of Maryland School of Law, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development and Maryland Technology Enterprise Institute. Formerly headquartered at the Maryland Technology Development Center in Rockville, the center will now be housed in the university's incubator.

County resident's firm to co-produce G20 Summit

The firm of Jefferson resident Ajay Patil, Showcall, was selected to co-produce the Pittsburgh G20 Summit Sept. 24 and 25.

The summit will host a discussion by more than 20 world leaders and their finance ministers on economic policies and how to address the global financial crisis. Patil's firm will co-produce and provide technical production in conjunction with Hargrove Inc. of Lanham, according to Showcall information.

"The Pittsburgh Summit marks the 6th international summit our firm has had the distinct honor of being associated with and it is a responsibility we do not take lightly," Patil said in a statement.

Verizon looks to raise rates, reimburse for lost service

Maryland's Public Service Commission began discussing Tuesday a proposal from Verizon that the company hopes will allow it to charge customers more and to avoid fines for poor service and maintenance.

In an e-mail, Verizon spokeswoman Sandra Arnette said the company is offering to distribute \$1 million to customers who have "experienced extended out-of-service conditions and missed appointments" and could give up another \$6 million if it fails to meet standards in the future.

Under the proposal, the monthly rate for basic residential service could increase by no more than \$1 per year and for basic business service by no more than \$2 per year. The company also is offering to continue to keep charges for land lines uniform across Maryland for three years. As a result of Tuesday's hearing, the commission postponed hearings on the issue over the next week and has yet to reschedule them.

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