With President Barack Obama proposing another round of BRACs (Base Realignment and Closure), the St. Mary’s County Commissioners are contemplating doing a study of what the county needs to do to prevent the county from being adversely affected.

The recommended budget that goes to public hearing on April 30 contains $350,000 within the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) budget to do the study. The study would also include the effects on the county of Sequestration.

At the Tuesday, April 23 commissioner meeting, DECD Director Steven Anderson gave an outline of what such a study, called a SWOT analysis, would entail. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. SWOTs are often used by businesses and non-profit organizations to engage their workforce in the challenges of the organization.

Anderson said a consultant would be hired to conduct the SWOT analysis. He said that analysis would generally take 60-90 days.

Anderson said in many respects the county is behind other political jurisdictions in addressing the potential threats from another BRAC round. He reeled off several base communities around the nation that are addressing the issue. Anderson said the state does have a BRAC office but the county also needs to be engaged locally in the issue.

Commissioner Todd Morgan (R; 4th) was instrumental in getting the money for the study in the recommended budget. He said all aspects of the county’s economy, including tourism, the Chamber and the Navy Alliance need to be part of the planning process. The Navy Alliance was initially formed when the first BRAC round was proposed.

Commissioner Cynthia Jones (R: 1st) said the threat to the county becomes greater with each successive BRAC because there are fewer places to make cuts. “That makes it more important to get our ducks in the row,” she said.

The commissioners made no decision to proceed with the SWOT, instead choosing to wait until after the budget process plays out. The commissioners have to make a decision on the budget by the end of May.

The budget hearing is at 6 p.m. April 30th at Chopticon High School in Morganza.