

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on September 14, 2017 in conjunction with the Council's annual field trip. This year the Council took a Seafood Industries Tour made possible by Kelley Cox.

Members and guests met at the MSRC office at 8:45 a.m., to board the bus and head to the first stop; the Tilghman Island Watermen's Museum in the Historic Lee House. Once there the group wandered through the museum looking at all the wonderful memorabilia, pictures and videos depicting Tilghman Island's history in the seafood industry. We also had the pleasure of watching a gentleman show us how to make a fishing net. After the group was done we met outside to have a conversation with Jeff Harrison, president of the Tilghman Waterman's Association. Mr. Harrison shared with the group the difficulties on Tilghman Island that plague today's watermen, and how it will disappear if changes are not implemented. One problem is the cost of buying back oyster shells. While there are taxes put in place where watermen will recoup approximately \$1.50 for a certain amount of shell; due to price fluctuation it can cost them \$3.00 to buy back the same amount of shell. Another huge problem is the need for the Knapp's Narrows waterway to be dredged. At low tide watermen and recreational boats cannot navigate the waterway. Although funds have been allocated in the federal budget for this dredging, the budget has not yet been passed. If a continuing resolution is used to fund the federal government, funds for this project will not be available. A third issue is the aging workforce in the industry. Young people are not being attracted to the traditional watermen lifestyle since it is becoming increasingly difficult to make a decent living. A special thank you to Mary Kellogg and all the volunteers, they opened the museum especially for our tour. It is normally closed on Thursdays. Visit their website to learn more at www.tilghmanmuseum.org.

Once back on the bus Kelley Cox took the group on a tour of Tilghman Island. She spoke about the Island's heritage and pointed out several landmarks, including the Dogwood Harbor, Tilghman Elementary School, St. John's Chapel, and the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory. Ms. Cox discussed challenges facing the Island. Some of which are the closing of the only bank on the Island, the possible closing of TES, and struggles Fairbank Tackle is having with their fuel storage (the only gas station on the Island). She also spoke about the dredging of Knapp's Narrows as it relates to the challenges the new fireboat faces in navigating to emergencies.

The next stop was Phillips Wharf Environmental Center (PWEC). The group entered the building near the water where Ms. Cox showed us 1 year old oysters' that are now large enough to be moved to floating cages to finish growing. She explained how difficult it is to make a living as a waterman and how she is happy to aid the young watermen on the Island just starting out by talking with them daily and answering any questions they may have. She gave a big thank you to Johnny Shockley of the Hooper's Island Oyster Company for helping PWEC to get oyster growing established. PWEC has successfully grown over 500,000 oysters big enough to be transferred to cages for further growth. Mr. Shockley said he was happy to help and he would like everyone to know that this is a very lucrative business for anyone who is willing to put in the time and money to get started.

We moved to the main PWEC building to continue our discussion. Ms. Cox introduced T.J. Himmelman, PWEC Aquaculture Aquaria Manager, who is originally from New York. Ms. Cox also mentioned Marisa Moon, PWEC Education Director, who was not present. PWEC is open for tours daily with touch tanks full of live animals. They have aquaculture education programs for students and working watermen. PWEC maintains many educational programs including visits to schools with the fish mobile, conducts summer camps, hosts 4th grade oyster education week, and holds a winter lecture series. Ms. Cox said the PWEC has been visited by people from all over the United States. For more information visit them at www.phillipswharf.org.

Mr. Shockley gave a history of the Chesapeake Bay seafood industry. He then compared traditional seafood practices to aquaculture. Additionally, he highlighted some of the tremendous opportunities that the seafood industry can experience through aquaculture.

Talbot County Councilman Chuck Callahan and Maryland Department of Commerce representative Deborah Bowden had to leave the tour prior to lunch for other meetings.

The next stop was the Chesapeake House Restaurant in Tilghman, where the MSRC conducted its meeting.

MSRC members in attendance included Burton Wilson, Carolyn Spicher, Maria D'Arcy, Delegate Chris Adams, Delegate Johnny Mautz, Gale Nashold, Jerome Stanley, Kelley Cox, Senator Addie Eckardt, Jennifer Williams; Wilbur Levengood, and Walter Chase. Guests in attendance were: MARBIDCO representatives Steve McHenry, Amy Cook, LeeAnn McCullough and Linda Arnold; RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis; Caroline County residents Sherry Levengood and Jamie and Pattie Tibbitt; Senator VanHollen's representative Melissa Kelly; Senator Cardin's representative Kim Kratovil; Congressman Harris's representative Denise Lovelady; USDA Rural Development representative Kathy Beisner; ESRGC representative Mary Buffington; City of Cambridge Economic Development Associate Director Brandon Hesson; Eastern Shore Intergovernmental Affairs representative Bunky Luffman; Dorchester County Economic Development Director Jeff Trice; ESEC Executive Director Mike Thielke; Executive Assistant to the Dorchester County Manager Rebecca Guay White; Shore Gourmet and Chesapeake Culinary Center Development and Education Coordinator Roxanne Wolf; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Project Manager Ryan Snow; Eastern Shore Innovation Center Manager Steve Dolbow, Senator Eckardt's Assistant Melissa Einhorn; Johnny Shockley from Hooper's Island Oyster Company; and Shore Transit bus driver Calvin Harmon. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Action Items

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 1:14 p.m., at which time introductions were made. Mr. Levengood and Ms. Williams were carrying proxies for Larry Porter and Chuck Callahan, respectfully. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Dirck Bartlett, Ricky Travers, Dan Franklin, Don Satterfield, and Kurt Fuchs for members who were unable to attend due to other obligations.

Approval of June 8, 2017 Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval of the June 8, 2017 minutes. Delegate Mautz made a motion to approve, Senator Eckardt seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated all in favor signify by saying aye; all opposed have the same rights, ayes have it. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Warner stated Treasurer Kurt Fuchs had planned on attending but a personal matter arose this morning preventing him from doing so. Mr. Warner stated that all income and expenses are on track for the first quarter of FY18 and he would entertain any questions. Being none Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve the report, Mr. Stanley seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated all in favor signify by saying aye; all opposed have the same rights, ayes have it. The motion passed unanimously.

Sponsors

Mr. Warner stated that today's trip was graciously sponsored by Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) and the Rural Maryland Council (RMC).

MARBIDCO Executive Director Steve McHenry spoke to the group for a few minutes highlighting some of MARBIDCO's efforts to assist resource-based businesses. Since its establishment MARBIDCO has been extremely active in the Mid-Shore region. Mr. McHenry noted that pamphlets and printouts are included in the meeting packets. He invited everyone to review the information and to please contact MARBIDCO with any questions or comments.

Next, RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis spoke about the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) which is in its second year of funding. Grant awards have been determined and monies should be dispersed in the near future. Ms. Davis also stated that FY18 MAERDAF (Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund) awards have been announced. One of the recipient's this year was Phillips Wharf Environmental Center. Furthermore, Ms. Davis stated that as the RMC Executive Director she is facilitating the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless and Cellular Service created during the 2017 legislative session. If anyone would like more information on meeting dates or reports, it is all available on their website www.rural.maryland.gov.

Updates

Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC)

Mary Buffington, ESRGC Project Manager, gave an update on several projects the ESRGC and MSRC have been partnering on. She gave an overview of the progress made on the housing studies being conducted on 13 municipalities in the mid-shore. The interns have completed the data collection and the ESRGC office is finalizing the reports. The information should be distributed to the municipalities in the next few weeks. Ms. Buffington then spoke about the Agriculture GIS Extension project. She explained some of the work that has been done to assist farmers in regards to collecting information for water retention, crop degradation and their causes, e.g. pest damage. Much time has

been spent working with agriculture extension agents and nutrient managers. She stated that farmers have been contacting the ESRGC for information. The final project update was on the Eastern Shore Index. This includes the Health Dashboard that is in the final stage of completion, the Education Dashboard that is being designed and should be completed by December, and the Economic Dashboard that will be initiated this fall.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

ESEC Executive Director Mike Thielke shared the progress of F3 Tech (Farm, Fish, Food). F3 Tech will hopefully position Maryland as a nationally recognized leader in agriculture, aquaculture and environmental technologies. He stated that the project is starting to get real traction and he has been contacted by many people about it, some as far away as Australia. The effort is to advance innovation and technology; one example being a new innovation that enables internet access for farmers in the field so they can utilize their precision agriculture machinery and equipment in real-time for data and analytics. There are also one day symposium events each quarter; to help advance awareness, open dialogue and explore opportunities. Lastly, there is an accelerator program which consists of three stages: one-day Challenge Events, a six-week pre-accelerator or proof-of-concept program, and a traditional four-month accelerator program.

Conversation with Senator Addie Eckardt, Delegates Johnny Mautz and Chris Adams

Senator Addie Eckardt, Delegate Chris Adams and Delegate John Mautz shared what they have been working on and concerns they have been hearing from constituents. During their talk they collectively addressed many issues including the viability of the seafood industry, the future of healthcare, and broadband access. As always, they encouraged everyone to maintain an open dialog with them as they prepare for the coming legislative session.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner reminded everyone of the upcoming MSRC meetings;

Mid Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2017 at 12:00pm at the Talbot County Free Library in Easton

Mid-Shore Regional Council meeting on Thursday, December 7, 2017 at 11:00am at the Hyatt in Cambridge - Followed by Eastern Shore Regional Councils Joint Luncheon Meeting during the MACo Winter Conference

Announcements/comments

As mentioned earlier, a big thank you to our sponsors who helped make today possible.

- MARBIDCO
- RMC

Thanks to Mike Pennington and Brad Bellacicco of the TCCLES and Shore Transit for providing a brand new bus for our day's travels.

Also, an enormous thank you to Kelley Cox for all her help in organizing the day and speakers.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

The tour was completed and the bus returned to the MSRC office.