

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled Executive Board meeting on May 26, 2023, at the MSRC office. Executive Board members in attendance were Chairman Walter Chase, Delegate Chris Adams, Kurt Fuchs, Frank Bartz, Chuck Callahan, James Redman, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, and Bill Christopher. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

Executive Session

Employee Matters

Chairman Chase called for a closed session so Mr. Warner and Ms. Deighan were asked to leave the meeting so the Executive Board could discuss the MSRC staff's performance and the Executive Director's Annual Performance Evaluation. The staff was asked to return at 10:28 a.m.

Action Items

Approval of November 23, 2022, Minutes

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Christopher seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of January 4, 2023, Minutes

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Christopher seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of February 2, 2023, Minutes

Ms. Haddaway-Riccio made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Christopher seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of March 29, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Redman seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Ratification of electronic vote “Recommendation of Dan Franklin to serve as a member of the Mid-Shore Regional Council as the ‘private sector/private citizen’ from Caroline County.”

Mr. Warner stated he received 7 responses from the Executive Board, and all were marked “Approve”.

Mr. Christopher made a motion to ratify the recommendation. Ms. Haddaway-Riccio seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of MSRC FY22 independent financial statements

Delegate Adams made a motion to accept the financial statements. Mr. Fuchs seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report

MSRC Treasurer Kurt Fuchs stated there are three reports making up the total MSRC financial report.

The first report was the MSRC Treasurer’s Report (operating report). Mr. Fuchs stated all expenditures and income are on track for almost being at the end of the current fiscal year and he would entertain any questions.

The second report was the 2023 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment fund (RMPIF) Report. Mr. Fuchs stated that all funds have been distributed as listed. Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions.

The third report was the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Report. After Mr. Fuchs directed everyone’s attention to the report sheet, he deferred to Mr. Warner to explain. Mr. Warner stated that to date Caroline County and Talbot County have executed addendums to their MOUs with the MSRC regarding the additional \$60,000 each provided for administration. Dorchester has not requested their portion of those funds yet.

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve all three reports as presented. Delegate Adams seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second; any further discussion. All in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Approval FY24 Scope of Work

Mr. Warner stated there were a few recommended changes to the FY24 Scope of Work. The items that are grey highlighted are to be deleted, while the items that have yellow highlighting are to be added.

Mr. Warner described the proposed changes:

Page 2, Objective 2, Deliverable bullet 5

- Change “Monitor the State of Maryland’s Rural Health Collaborative Pilot (created by Senate Bill 1056 during the 2018 General Assembly Session) particularly the stated purpose to “Enhance rural economic development in the mid-shore region.””
to
“Monitor the State of Maryland’s Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition (created by Senate Bill 498 during the 2023 General Assembly Session) particularly the final stated purpose to “Enhance rural economic development in the mid-shore region.”

Page 3, Objective 4, Action 4

- Change “Examine the interest and viability of establishing regional technology programs/school”
to
“Support the expansion of regional trades and technical programs”

Page 3, Objective 4, Deliverable bullet 7

- “Assist in the establishment of a study to determine the feasibility of a regional technology school or utilizing Chesapeake College in offering regional technology programs”
to
“Assist Chesapeake College with the development of the trades programs and new Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship as appropriate”

Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the FY24 Scope of Work with the changes as suggested. Mr. Christopher seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously. The FY24 Scope of Work will be presented at the MSRC June 8, 2023, meeting for the full Council’s consideration.

Discussion/Approval FY24 Budget

Mr. Warner stated there are no major changes to the FY24 operating budget. The only increases are to fringe benefits due to rate changes and a slight increase in advertising to cover the public notice for our annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update.

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the FY24 operating budget as presented. Ms. Haddaway-Riccio seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously. The FY24 operating budget will be presented at the MSRC June 8, 2023, meeting for the full Council’s consideration.

Including Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds (RMPIF)

Mr. Warner stated that in FY24 the MSRC will once again be receiving \$600,000 in RMPIF funding. He pointed out there are two documents in the meeting packets regarding the MSRC’s RMPIF proposed projects. One document is the proposed budget sheet and the other document entitled Mid-

Shore Regional Council's request for funding support in FY2024 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) describes the projects. The project descriptions are in the same form as the actual grant that is being prepared.

Mr. Warner then reviewed each project and its funding amount.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) - \$165,000

This is continued support and partnership with the MSRC created ESEC. An investment to financially assist in the administrative overhead of ESEC in its efforts to attract economic development investment to the Mid Shore counties and the Eastern Shore region at-large. ESEC's efforts include delivery of technical assistance, business services, and financial assistance to the startup and entrepreneur ecosystem and the expansion of programs and projects such as the F³ Tech Accelerator Program, the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, a Food Safety Training Program, and a developing Produce and Seafood Processing Facility and an Agbiotech Manufacturing Facility.

Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center - \$165,000

Support the partnership between Shore Gourmet (SG) and Chesapeake Culinary Center (CCC) to increase rural and economic development on the Mid-Shore by working with farmers, entrepreneurs, and institutions by developing value added products, collaborating with UMES, University of Maryland, University of Delaware, and Virginia Tech to develop and research profitable niche crops with farmer to consumer, and brand and promote products made in the region.

During the Shore Gourmet Board of Directors meeting on May 23, 2023, the Board unanimously voted to continue the SG partnership with CCC to assist with financial support and guidance. The vote included SG's desire to financially support the partnership with this requested funding amount.

Delmarva Index - \$9,500

This is a continued partnership with The Tri County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore (TCCLES). The recommended funding includes maintenance of several tools (Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA tools (tax revenue, tourism, and hubsite applications), Healthcare Facilities Map, State Parks Dashboard, Public Safety Dashboard, Workforce Infographics (county, municipal, commute area), and Economic Snapshots).

Circuit Rider - \$30,000

This is to continue the GIS assistance to counties and municipalities. The funding amount is the same as FY23.

An ongoing issue in the Mid and Lower Shore of Maryland's Eastern Shore is Towns using GIS but only one person trained in how to utilize the technology and it is rarely part of their daily workflow. Without regular use, GIS is like any other skill in that it must be practiced to be maintained. There are many instances where jurisdictions have a need for assistance with data analyses that cannot be performed by the staff on hand. Responding to the need for on-site assistance with GIS-related tasks, the Circuit Rider position will be available to travel to jurisdictions throughout the Mid-Shore and provide specialized solutions to data analysis needs.

Agricultural Reporting Application - \$10,500

In partnership with University of Maryland Agricultural Extension, TCCLES, Upper Shore Regional Council, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, and Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, develop an application that will provide an alternative workflow to agricultural producers that will streamline and enhance record keeping and will help compile information for state and federal reporting requirements. The application will provide a free and publicly accessible resource for producers to track and visualize farm data.

MUST Bus Website Redesign and Redevelopment - \$46,000

The current MUST site was last upgraded in 2016. This proposed redevelopment will allow MUST to take advantage of the latest in web design, desktop and mobile development and mapping technologies such as Next.js, Vercel, ESRI and Google Maps. These technologies will enhance the stability of the site by allowing the ESRGC to update software patches and upgrades more easily and will increase the types of features and functionality that can be extended to the end user. Along with a new modern website design, the ESRGC will also add interactive mapping functionality to the site.

Annie's Project - \$9,000

Supporting the University of Maryland Extension in providing Women in Agriculture and Annie's Project to the Mid-Shore region (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties). Annie's Project is a farm management workshop for women interested in agriculture. Other activities also include a farm tour and recordkeeping/bookkeeping workshop that will be hands on.

Summer Career Enrichment Programs - \$100,000

The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) supports the partnership between the PFC Coalition, DCTC, Dorchester County, Talbot County and Caroline County School Systems. The program is designed to engage students in hands-on activities where they learn skills in requirements gathering, working on teams, delivering presentations, interviewing techniques, time management, project management, leadership development, and problem solving. The instructors will incorporate strategies to teach students on how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business. In addition, students will be exposed to career professionals in computer science, cyber, engineering, programming, aviation, construction, media, and TV production. Instructors will incorporate strategies to teach students how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business.

Regional Marketing - \$5,000

Supporting the regional marketing effort Taste of the Eastern Shore (TOTES). TOTES is a long-standing effort to promote Eastern Shore government and business entities to a statewide audience of elected and appointed officials. The economic development offices located in the Mid-Shore region (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties) will be offered a prominent display area at the event.

Mr. Redman made a motion to approve the FY24 RMPIF budget as presented. Delegate Adams seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion passed

unanimously. The FY24 RMPIF budget will be presented at the MSRC June 8, 2023, meeting for the full Council's consideration.

Pertinent Matter

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund

Mr. Warner wanted the Executive Board to be aware that an Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) project in Caroline County may not move forward in the county. If the project does not remain in Caroline County, the \$300,000 Caroline County allocated to the project will remain in the county. Caroline County will then have to determine how to invest the funds in an existing RMEDF project or a new project. Once the MSRC is notified by the county on how they will reallocate the funds, the MSRC will work with the Maryland Department of Commerce to revise the RMEDF grant.

Discussion regarding meeting concerning UM Shore Regional Health

The Executive Board had a candid conversation regarding the state of the new regional medical center (hospital) project and their two meetings with University of Maryland Shore Regional Health President and CEO Ken Kozel. (The meetings were held on February 2, 2023, and March 29, 2023.) Some members were present for both meetings, some for only one, but the general consensus was one of distrust of information being shared with them. Chairman Chase suggested that after the Executive Board's next meeting with Mr. Kozel, they reevaluate the communication. If the board does not feel they can rely on the information shared, they may decide to go directly to the University of Maryland Board of Directors. The board was in favor of this suggestion.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MSRC full council meeting will be held on Thursday, June 8, at 5:00pm at Choptank Electric in Denton, Maryland.

Letters of endorsement sent by MSRC

Mr. Warner reminded the Executive Board members of endorsement letters they approved to send. Copies of each letter were included in their meeting packets; the date of each letter is in parenthesis.

- UM Shore Regional Health's application for congressionally directed funding (2-28-23 Senators Cardin and Van Hollen, 3-9-23 Congressman Harris)
- Greensboro Regional Wastewater System request for congressionally directed funding (2-27-23 Senators Cardin and Van Hollen)
- Regional Trail Network request to National Park Service (2-22-23)
- Easton Utilities new water treatment plant and well application for congressionally directed funding (2-16-23 Senator Van Hollen, 2-22-23 Senator Cardin)
- Signed onto Maryland Forests Association letter of concern regarding SB-590
- UM Shore Regional Health's CON application (2-7-23)

Member comments/requests

None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m. by unanimous consent.