

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled Executive Board meeting on May 21, 2024, at the MSRC office. Executive Board members in attendance at the office were Chairman Walter Chase, Chuck Callahan, Frank Bartz, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, and Kurt Fuchs. Members joining via zoom were Senator Mautz, Bill Christopher, and James Redman. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Action Items

Approval of April 29, 2024, Minutes

Approval of April 29, 2024, Closed Executive Session Minutes

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve both sets of minutes as submitted. Mr. Bartz 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 presented three financial reports.

The first report was the MSRC Treasurer's Report (operating report). Mr. Fuchs stated all expenditures and income are on track for this time of year and he would entertain any questions.

The second report was the 2024 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) report. Mr. Fuchs stated that all funds have been distributed as listed and there has been no change to this report since our last meeting. Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions.

The third report was the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Report. Mr. Fuchs deferred to Mr. Warner. Mr. Warner stated that the changes since the last presentation were under the consultant category and Dorchester administration allocation.

Mr. Warner stated that Dorchester County's \$60,000 allocation for administration has been issued. They are not using it for administration; they are using it for project fees for the Woods Road project modification Rails to Trails project from Washington Street to Woods Road. The Rails to Trails project will provide a way for employees to safely get to companies located on Woods Road. Chairman Chase had an issue with using the word "safely" in the explanation, since it cannot be guaranteed. Mr. Warner said he would modify the statement in future discussions and documents to convey "safer".

Ms. Haddaway-Riccio made a motion to approve all three reports as presented. Mr. Bartz 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 FY25 Scope of Work

Mr. Warner stated that there were no changes to the FY25 Scope of Work since the MSRC Executive Board reviewed at their last meeting held April 29, 2024. Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the Scope of Work. 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. The FY25 Scope of Work will be presented at the MSRC June 13, 2024, meeting for the full Council's consideration.

Discussion/Approval FY25 Budget

Mr. Warner stated that the only changes to the FY25 operating budget made since the last Executive Board meeting (April 29, 2024) were to personnel and taxes to incorporate the generous salary increase given to the MSRC employees, for which we were incredibly grateful. Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the budget. 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. The FY25 operating budget will be presented at the MSRC June 13, 2024, meeting for the full Council's consideration.

Including Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds (RMPIF)

Mr. Warner reminded the Executive Board that in FY25 the MSRC will be receiving \$600,000 in RMPIF funding. 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 FY2025 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.

Since the last Executive Board meeting, changes to the suggested funding amounts are to the following projects:

- Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center
- Shore Gourmet
- Summer Career Enrichment Program
- Entrepreneurship Training Program

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

MSRC Capacity Building Coordinator - \$31,200

Provide additional capacity for MSRC in development, delivery, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and activities. The Capacity Building Coordinator will serve as a liaison between program directors and other stakeholders to support program reporting to MSRC, the board of directors, and other stakeholders.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) - \$80,000

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, entrepreneur, and innovation ecosystem (that includes farmers and value-add producers) and the expansion of programs and projects such as the F³ Tech Accelerator Program and Agbiotech Manufacturing, the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, a Food Safety Training Program, and a developing Produce Processing and Aggregation Facility.

Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center - \$80,000

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 16, 2024, 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 - \$11,250

Continue working with the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) and the ESRGC to further develop an online repository and visualization tool that will function as a comprehensive data source for demographic, economic, geographic, environmental and social data, pertaining to the Delmarva Peninsula (or if datasets for the 3 states are not consistently available, the focus will be on the 9 counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore). Phase VII will add additional value to the Index through continued maintenance and updates to Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA Tools, Workforce Infographics, Economic Snapshots, Economic Dashboard, Healthcare Facilities Map, State Parks Dashboard, and Public Safety Dashboard.

Circuit Rider - \$30,000

This is to continue the GIS assistance to counties and municipalities. The funding amount is the same as FY24.

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 Census Dashboard - \$13,500

This is a partnership with the TCCLES.

This proposed application will explore agricultural data and the economics of agriculture on Maryland's Eastern Shore and will highlight some of the potential opportunities and threats to this industry. This publicly accessible application will visualize data from the USDA Agricultural Census with emphasis on change overtime from 2012, 2017 and 2022. A variety of Agricultural Census statistics will be included to provide users an understanding of farms, producers, and the economics of agriculture on the Eastern Shore. This application builds off another popular Delmarva Index resource, the Agricultural Census Infographics which were developed in Fiscal Year 2020. The new application will expand upon these static infographics to include additional statistics and data points and will incorporate interactive elements, allowing the user to filter and explore the data in a more engaging way. Data will be visualized through a series of charts, maps, and indicators.

Delmarva Index Website Upgrades - \$7,500

This is a partnership with the TCCLES.

New resources and data continue to be added to the Delmarva Index each year however, the site itself has not undergone major updates since its initial launch in 2019. This potential website upgrade will allow the ESRGC to reevaluate the Delmarva Index website and implement many important enhancements based on user input and committee feedback. The ESRGC will utilize modern standards in design and development to upgrade the front-end design and backend functionality. The ESRGC will also lean heavily on feedback received from users and committee members to upgrade the website including improvements to the overall design to invoke a data-centric website, streamlined access to data, addition of logical categories, links directly to products, and more.

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 Program - \$197,550

The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) is a 4-week program aimed at providing middle school students with hands-on activities and training in Cyber, Media Arts, Chess, Presentation and Video Design, App Development, Drones, Animation, and Robotics that lead to students becoming college and career ready. The program is in partnership with the Mid-Shore Regional Council, PFC Coalition, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center, and Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline County school systems, and targets rising 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. The program provides an opportunity for students to learn skills in requirements gathering, working on teams, delivering presentations, interviewing techniques, time management, project management, leadership development, and problem solving. The instructors also incorporate strategies to teach students on how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business. In addition, students are exposed to career professionals and entrepreneurs, and gain

unique experience to boost their confidence level, critical thinking, and interaction with peers.

Entrepreneurship Training Program - \$75,000

To assist small, minority, woman, and veteran entrepreneurs with education, mentorship, and access to capital through an 8-week training program with the goal of helping businesses increase revenue, create jobs, and grow the local and state economies.

One cohort per county (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) will be supported.

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. Warner stated that the MSRC's investment in SCEP could be lowered since sponsorships for the program are still being secured. If the SCEP funding can be lowered, it is his recommendation to move the additional funds to ESEC. If this situation arises it can be addressed at the MSRC's June 13 meeting.

Mr. Callahan made a motion to approve the FY25 RMPIF budget as presented. Mr. Bartz 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 FY25 RMPIF budget will be presented at the MSRC June 13, 2024, meeting for the full Council's consideration.

Updates

MSRC membership

Caroline County Municipal Representative

Since the last Executive Board meeting Mr. Warner spoke to Kim Abner (Town of Federalsburg Mayor). She is the current organizer of the Caroline County Association of Municipalities (CCAM). Mayor Abner invited Mr. Warner to present to the CCAM. She wanted the towns in Caroline County to learn all the support and programs the MSRC provides. The presentation was held during the CCAM meeting on May 15, 2024, at 6:00pm at Wharves at Choptank Visitor & Heritage Center in Denton. CCAM members will discuss and the MSRC will be notified who will be the Caroline County municipal representative.

Representative from Maryland Seafood Industries

Mr. Christopher and Mr. Warner met with Aubrey Vincent (President, Lindy's Seafood) on May 20, 2024, to provide her with an orientation of the MSRC. She agreed to serve as the Maryland Seafood Industries representative on the MSRC.

Talbot County Minority Leader

Burton Wilson passed away on May 8, 2024. Mr. Wilson was the original Talbot County Minority Leader on the MSRC. Mr. Warner found in the Council's December 3, 2003, minutes, Mr. Wilson attended a new member orientation in Cambridge along with Jerome Stanley and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio. Mr. Wilson's funeral will be held on June 1, 2024.

Chairman Chase suggested Joyce Harrod to fill the Talbot County Minority Leader slot. The members of the Executive Board agreed. Chairman Chase and Mr. Warner will reach out to Ms. Harrod to gauge her interest.

Talbot County Municipal Elected Official

Joyce Harrod (St. Michaels Commissioner) lost her reappointment bid for office and will no longer serve on the MSRC as the Talbot County municipal representative. Her last day on the MSRC will be June 12, 2024, when the new St. Michaels Commissioners are sworn into office.

Non-voting Member

Dorchester County recently hired a new County Manager, Jerry Jones. Mr. Jones first day on the job was May 20, 2024, and is therefore a member of the MSRC.

UM Shore Regional Health

At the last MSRC Executive Board meeting Senator Mautz said he would reach out to University of Maryland Medical System to schedule a meeting to discuss Shore Regional Health. Mr. Warner stated that he will poll the Executive Board to get possible dates for a meeting and communicate the information to Senator Mautz.

Upcoming Meetings

The next MSRC full council meeting will be on Thursday, June 13, 2024, at 5:00pm at the Choptank Electric Building in Denton. (Caroline County)

Member comments/requests

None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m. by unanimous consent.