

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on September 10, 2020. This meeting was held virtually via web conference due to COVID-19. The meeting was facilitated from the Talbot County Community Center in the Wye Oak Room with three MSRC executive board members (Walter Chase, Chuck Callahan, and Allen Nelson), an additional MSRC member (Burton Wilson), and MSRC staff (Scott Warner and Terry Deighan) present. The Wye Oak Room was set up to meet social distancing guidelines. Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Mike Thielke was also present as he managed the web platform during the meeting.

MSRC members in attendance included: Chuck Callahan, James Redman, Carolyn Spicher, Lenny Pfeffer, Frank Divilio, Kurt Fuchs, Dan Franklin, Delegate Chris Adams, Kelley Cox, Robert Hanson, Walter Chase, Burton Wilson, Delegate Johnny Mautz, Allen Nelson, and Andy Hollis. Guests in attendance included: ESEC Executive Director Mike Thielke; Maryland House of Delegates Speaker Pro Tem Sheree Sample-Hughes; Maryland Department of Natural Resources Special Assistant to the Secretary Bunky Luffman; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Nancy LaJoice; Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Managers Erin Silva and Mary Buffington; Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham, Executive Assistant Brenda Howard, and Regional Communications Developer Monique Snyder; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser; Maryland Cooperative Extension Talbot County Educator Shannon Dill; TEDCO Rural Business Innovation Initiative (RBI2) Lower Shore Region Representative Bill Bernard; Senator Addie Eckardt's Chief of Staff Gabrielle Leach; Choptank Electric Cooperative Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Relations Val Connelly and Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau; Governor Larry Hogan's Eastern Shore Outreach Coordinator Ryan Snow; Easton Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Tracy Ward; U.S. Senator Ben Cardin's Field Representative Kim Kratovil; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Melissa Kelly; Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board Executive Director Dan McDermott; and USDA Rural Development representative Debi Proud. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Action Items

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. after Mr. Warner took a roll call of all persons attending the meeting. Chairman Chase was in possession of a proxy from Senator Eckardt. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Anthony Casey who could not attend in person due to other obligations.

Approval of June 11, 2020 Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval of the June 11, 2020 minutes. Mr. Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Callahan seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion; all opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

MSRC Treasurer Kurt Fuchs presented the Treasurer's Report. He stated that everything is on track. You will notice that under funding sources the MSRC has received money from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, but not the State of Maryland. He stated that the MSRC staff is in contact with all funders and everything is fine. He offered to entertain any questions and if there are none he would turn it over to Mr. Warner. Mr. Warner noted that there is one change to this report as compared to the budget that the Council passed at their June meeting. The change is the additional line item under funding sources listed as MD Commerce Supplemental. He explained that the Maryland Department of Commerce offered modifications of an additional \$20,000 to each of the five regional councils' FY20 grants. These funds are to be spent by the end of the first quarter of FY21 (July 2020 through September 2020). This supplemental funding fills the gap of the 10% budget reduction each regional council received on their \$200,000 FY21 grants. (The reduction was due to budget cuts implemented by the Governor and approved by the Board of Public Works due to the economic implications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.) Therefore, the budget that the Council passed in June that had a line item of \$200,000 under Maryland Department of Commerce still has the same amount of grant funds coming in for FY21, but the funds are coming to the Council in two grants. One grant is the FY21 grant in the amount of \$180,000 and the other grant is the supplemental funding provided by the modification of the FY20 grant in the amount of \$20,000. He thanked the Maryland Department of Commerce and the Governor for making MSRC operating budget whole. This action is greatly appreciated. He further stated that the supplemental money has already been expended and should be received shortly. Mr. Nelson noted a change should be made to the FY dates at the top of the report to correct them from FY20 (07/01/19 – 06/30/20) to FY21 (07/01/20- 06/30/21). Being no further questions or comments; Mr. Nelson made a motion to accept the report. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion, all opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

EDA's CARES Act Recovery Assistance to MSRC

Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 Project

Mr. Warner stated the grants to support this project were awarded to the MSRC and TCCLES on July 14, 2020. The grant period is 24-months covering July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022. The committee is made up of representation from MSRC, TCCLES, ESRGC, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, Lower Shore Workforce Alliance, Caroline County Economic Development Office, Dorchester County Economic Development Office, and the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Warner invited TCCLES Executive Director Greg Padgham to share his thoughts on the project. Mr. Padgham provided an overview of the project's concept as well as a brief history of the partnership between the TCCLES and MSRC in conducting such regional projects. He further stated how thrilled the TCCLES is to continue its partnership with the MSRC.

Mr. Warner and Mr. Padgham highlighted the progress and activities to date. The committee has held three meetings: August 5, 2020; August 19, 2020; and September 2, 2020. During these meetings the committee has reviewed the Project Narrative, reviewed the Mid-Shore CEDS Economic Resilience section, worked through the Special Award Conditions, discussed sole source (private contractors, consultants, etc.) verse subawards (governments, non-profit organizations, etc.), shared tracking assistant documents provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and discussed various ideas of recovery tools that will be developed.

The Special Award Conditions included Fraud Awareness Training via a slide presentation provided by EDA and the drafting of a Grant Administration Plan. The committee reviewed Fraud Awareness Training together, but the only parties required to sign the documents were the MSRC and TCCLES. The committee together crafted the Grant Administration Plan. Both conditions were submitted to EDA on time by the MSRC and TCCLES.

Additionally, Mr. Warner explained that the grant is using subawards to the ESRGC and the counties (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) to build capacity. It was explained to him by EDA that subaward entities for such capacity building can be governments, universities, and non-profit organizations. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Agreement between MSRC, TCCLES, ESRGC, and counties is being reviewed by all parties. It is an internal document between the parties.

The committee has established to meet every two weeks via web conference and they will manage communication on the project via Basecamp software.

Mr. Warner concluded by reading the project's summary paragraph included in the Grant Administration Plan so all the meeting attendees had a succinct, basic understanding of the project. He encouraged everyone to contact the MSRC if they needed additional information on the project.

Updates

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

ESEC Executive Director Mike Thielke shared updates via a slide presentation regarding the F³ Tech Accelerator program. The program began Tuesday, September 2, 2020. The F³ Tech Accelerator Program received more applicants than ever before (54) and chose the five best-qualified portfolio companies for its Fall program. Applicants came from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, United Kingdom, and Indonesia. The companies selected are Active Charge (windmill energy), Energylink3 (leading edge battery tech for Ag, Aqua, Bio & DoD), InventWood (advanced forestry & materials), Solar Oyster (automated aquaculture), and Vand (integrated water quality). Three companies originate in Maryland and the other two in New York. One of the New York companies is establishing a presence in Maryland and it is the desire of ESEC that the other company will as well. The selected finalists will receive funding and executive support to expedite commercial sales and prepare each company for potential investment, acquisition, or commercial launch.

The program focuses on advancing innovation and new technologies within agriculture, aquaculture and environment technology sectors. Mr. Thielke stated that due to COVID two additional categories have been added: Supply Chain and Energy.

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST)

Mr. Warner stated that 40,000 transfers were ordered June/July; 20,000 schedules were delivered to the Easton One Stop on July 17; and 3 fold brochures (3,000 English, 1,000 Spanish) were printed and delivered to MSRC office in July. Additionally, Queen Anne's County, County Ride individual brochures were printed and delivered in July and the MUST website has been updated to mirror the updated printed schedules. He thanked Ms. Deighan for the tremendous amount of work she commits to facilitating and executing the updating of the schedules and website. She works with the transportation providers, ESRGC, and the Handy Group to get this done.

Mr. Warner also shared the 5310 grant announcement regarding enhanced mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities which he received yesterday:

The Maryland Department of Transportation/Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT/MTA) announced the availability of funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for Section 5310-Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities. MDOT MTA 5310 Program Manager is Nancy Huggins.

- Eligible Section 5310 Applicants
 - Private, non-profit entities and faith-based agencies that provide transportation services to disabled and elderly individuals and are exempt from taxation under § 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible to receive funding.
 - The application period opened today, September 10, 2020 and will end on October 30, 2020
 - A review of the 5310 grant application process will be held next Thursday, September 17, 2020 during the Transportation Association of Maryland virtual conference. Registration is not mandatory, but encouraged.
 - The session will be held in two one-hour parts:
 - Part I at 11:30am
 - Part II and Part III at 1:00pm
 - Registration is free
 - To register go to <https://www.taminc.org/conference>
 - Once the session has been completed a recording will be located along with the grant application on the TAM website under Resources, Office of Local Transit Support, MTA 5310 Grant Application <https://www.tamic.org/office-of-local-transit-support>
 - Contact the MSRC office for any of the above details.

MUST is the regional review authority for the 5310 grant process for the six counties: Cecil, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot.

- The Transportation 5310 Selection Review Committee is charged to endorse or not endorse 5310 grant applications.
- In the past the Committee has been responsible for reviewing the grants regarding four criteria (Part I of the grant application).
 - Criteria 1: Extent and Urgency of Local Needs
 - Criteria 2: Coordination and Cooperation
 - Criteria 3: Vehicle Utilization
 - Criteria 4: Fiscal and Managerial Capability

Shore Gourmet

Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf and Mr. Warner gave an update on Shore Gourmet using a slide presentation entitled Local Food Heals Community Illness. Since Ms. Wolf was participating in the web conference via cell phone and did not have access of a computer monitor to view the presentation she created, Mr. Warner read the slides and then Ms. Wolf elaborated on the content.

In December, 2019 Shore Gourmet launched a pilot program with Caroline County Public Schools to measure the impact of providing food insecure children with fresh, frozen dinners. Traditionally, these children received backpacks with processed, shelf stable meals. Shore Gourmet acquired a food sealer, established processes for meal assembly, and developed storage requirements. When the schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pilot project's goals were altered. Additionally, seniors at risk for food insecurity were added to the project.

From March through July 2020:

- 258,302 meals were delivered to 1,200 children
- 31,375 meals were delivered to 270 seniors
- 43 cafeteria workers remained employed
- 13,257 pounds of local produce was processed and stored

There were many beneficiaries and benefits to the region:

- The kids
- Farmers and producers
- Reduce food waste
- Increased employment

Ms. Wolf then summarized what was learned and the results.

- One sealer has become four sealers.
- Cafeteria workers have remained employed.
- The project has highlighted the demand for regional, local food processing and the need for a storage center. (More local product and produce could have been utilized and more of the region served.)
- With Caroline County Public Schools remaining virtual at the start of Fall 2020 school year, this project will enable the kids to continue to receive healthy meals.
- Although the pilot has not been able to collect the original data desired, it has certainly proven that the region needs to be more sustainable in good times and difficult periods.
- Local food supports the community in many ways: economic, health, and environmental standpoints!

Beth Brewster (Caroline County Public Schools Supervisor of Food Services and Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director) also talked about the program highlighting several items:

- students have come to rely on two meals a day during the week, but also weekend meals
- they had to stop purchasing local food because there was not enough storage space
- have kept cafeteria workers employed during the pandemic
- have benefitted from a myriad of volunteers who sort, wash, bag, and prepare the meals for distribution

Mr. Warner concluded by informing the Council and other attendees that there is a video entitled, Feeding Caroline County during COVID-19. The work of the Caroline County Public Schools, Chesapeake Culinary Center, Shore Gourmet, and many other partners are demonstrated in this remarkable film. This 10 minute and 45 second film was shared with the Shore Gourmet Board of Directors on August 7, 2020. The MSRC will share the link to the film with everyone via email following this meeting.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HN23XmzTqrewlbaLy1QTmU3AFcP-7yIm/view>

Rural Maryland Council (RMC)

RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis thanked Governor Larry Hogan and legislators for fully funding the RMC and Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) in the FY2021 budget. She added that the funding was reduced 5% due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Davis then provided an overview of the grant programs the RMC administers. Approximately 180 applications were submitted in phase 1 of the application process with 113 applications being reviewed in phase 2.

The RMC received 66 MAERDAF (Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund) applications this year for funding. Of those applications, 39 have been designated for awards. Total MAERDAF funds for FY2021 are \$859,542.54. 15 applications from the Eastern Shore were awarded.

The RMC received 42 RMPIF applications this year all hoping for part of the \$2,926,230.00 available. Funds this year were awarded in the areas of entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and health. 28 RMPIF applications were approved for a total of \$2,712,442.67. 13 RMPIF applications from the Eastern Shore were awarded. 5 applications were received from the Regional Councils for a total \$1,950,820.00.

Due to the State's spending freeze, expenditure forms were submitted to the Maryland Department of Budget and Management. The RMC should know soon when they can expend the funds.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner stated the next Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be held in October and it will most likely be conducted via web conference. The MSRC office will be in touch with the CEDS Committee in the coming weeks regarding the meeting details.

Announcements/comments

Mr. Warner stated that in Senator Eckardt's absence she wanted him to announce the following:

Senator Eckardt is on the Senate President's Advisory Work Group on Equity and Inclusion. The Work Group is to review the work of former task forces and previous legislation that addressed principles of inclusion and equity for all Marylanders. This review is focusing on systemic injustice, health care disparities, economic opportunity and environmental justice. Further, the Work Group will examine the status of inclusion and equity within the General Assembly and its agencies.

Senator Eckardt asked if anyone has any ideas on angel investing, please contact her.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.