

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on September 9, 2021, in conjunction with their annual field trip. This year the Council went to Egide USA in Dorchester County, Tanglewood Conservatories in Caroline County, and Sea Watch International in Talbot County.

MSRC members and guests met at the Council's office at 8:00 a.m. to board the bus and head to our first stop in Cambridge. Some individuals drove separately due to their work schedules and other commitments. A big thank you to Delmarva Community Transit (DCT) for providing the bus and bus driver, Assistant Transit Manager Jerome Fitchett.

MSRC members in attendance included: Burton Wilson, Carolyn Spicher, Senator Addie Eckardt, Joyce Harrod, Walter Chase, Delegate Johnny Mautz, Jerome Stanley, Peter Leshar, Lenny Pfeffer, Kurt Fuchs, and Speaker Pro Tem Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes.

Guests in attendance were: Delegate John Mautz's Legislative Director Sara Kilmon; Governor Larry Hogan's Eastern Shore Outreach Coordinator Grayson Middleton; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Nancy LaJoice; Senator Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Melissa Kelly; Congressman Andy Harris' Community Liaison Keith Graffius; Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser; Caroline County Economic Development Director Debbie Bowden, Coordinator Kendall Teague, and RELIEF Act Coordinator Chris Dorr; Easton Town Councilman Al Silverstein; Maryland Department of Natural Resources Special Assistant to the Secretary Bunky Luffman; Caroline County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder; and Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Coordinator Stephanie Wilkins. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

The first stop was in Cambridge.

MSRC members who drove separately joined those on the bus to conduct the Action Items portion of the MSRC meeting. Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 8:55 a.m. Chairman Chase was in possession of a proxy from Delegate Chris Adams. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Anthony Casey and Dan Franklin who could not attend today due to other obligations.

Action Items

Approval of June 10, 2021, Minutes

Senator Eckardt made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Stanley 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 approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

MSRC Treasurer Kurt Fuchs presented the current treasurer's report covering the first quarter for FY22. He stated that we are waiting to receive the first payment from the Maryland Department of Commerce, other than that everything else is on track for the first quarter. Ms. Spicher made a motion to accept the report as presented. Senator Eckardt 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 approved unanimously.

The action portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 a.m. Mr. Warner stated he will provide project updates during lunch.

Egide USA – Cambridge, MD – Dorchester County

Susan Banks, Dorchester County Economic Development Director, arranged this stop.

We entered Egide USA in Dorchester County and were given temperature checks and navy-blue lab coats to don on our tour. We were given a PowerPoint presentation where we learned that Egide is a group with an international dimension, specializing in the manufacture of hermetic packages for sensitive electronic components. It operates in cutting edge markets with strong technology barriers to entry in all critical industry segments including space and defense. The company has three locations: Cambridge, Maryland; San Diego, California, and Bollene, France.

After the tour of Egide USA the group drove to Denton.

Tanglewood Conservatories – Denton, MD – Caroline County

Debbie Bowden, Caroline County Economic Development Director, arranged this stop.

Tanglewood Conservatories offers custom design and manufacturing of conservatories, greenhouses, orangeries, pool enclosures, and skylights. They design, build, and deliver custom items all over the world. We entered the building and were given safety glasses for our tour. We saw everything from project design to actual building of the structures. We finished the tour with a video presentation given by Nicole Mihalos, who was in Florida for the unveiling of a Tanglewood project at Disney World.

Chesapeake Culinary Center – Denton, MD

We all traveled to the Chesapeake Culinary Center in Denton for lunch, at which time Mr. Warner gave the following updates to our group.

Updates

Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project

The Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 project has been formulated to assist the Mid-Shore and Lower Eastern Shore counties (the region) utilizing trusted, proven partnerships to develop economic recovery and resiliency technical platforms to provide technical assistance to local governments, businesses, and other organizations that work within the region.

Since the project's inception, it has been built on the Economic Resilience sections of the Mid-Shore and Lower Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). The outcomes of this project will be incorporated into both CEDS, as well as other online technical assistance tools managed by the partners.

Conversations on this project started in April 2020 with the first formal meeting being held on August 5, 2020. The 26th formal meeting was held on September 2, 2021.

Progress made:

- Eastern Shore Economic Recovery website has been released
- Maryland Tax Revenue Dashboard has been released
- Local Business Survey
 - The committee worked with BEACON to design and conduct the survey. The survey has been completed.
 - BEACON and ESRGC analyzed the results.
 - Initial draft of the Local Business Survey Results dashboard has been completed by the ESRGC. The committee is providing feedback.
- A tourism revenue dashboard is under development
- A fifth tool is under discussion

Progress presentations have been provided to the counties by the committee:

- Talbot County – held July 27, 2021
- Caroline County – held August 3, 2021
- Dorchester County – held September 2, 2021

Regional marketing project for the counties

Mr. Warner provided an update on the regional marketing project the counties asked MSRC to facilitate. The MSRC, economic development offices from all three counties (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot), Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, and the ESRGC are collaborating. The vision for this workforce development platform is to create a web portal for showcasing existing workforce programs available to both employers and workers. It is the goal to address the workforce challenges in the region by making a single web portal more easily accessible to both employers and workers. This project will coincide with the Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project. This tool is under development and is targeted for completion by December 2021.

After providing the updates of both projects, Mr. Warner commented on how great it is to work with the mid-shore county economic development directors: Debbie Bowden (Caroline), Susan Banks (Dorchester), and Cassandra Vanhooser (Talbot). He also thanked Stephanie Wilkins and Greg Padgham for MSRC's great partnership with the TCCLES, and the fantastic staff at the ESRGC.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner reminded everyone of the following upcoming meetings.

- Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be held on October 6, 2021 (Wednesday) at 12:00pm at Talbot County Community Center.

- Mid-Shore Regional Council meeting will be held on December 8, 2021 (Wednesday) at Hyatt, Cambridge in conjunction with the Eastern Shore Regional Councils Joint Luncheon Meeting.

Announcements/comments

There were no comments or requests.

After lunch the group drove to Easton.

Sea Watch International – Easton, MD – Talbot County

Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Economic Development & Tourism Director, arranged this tour.

Sea Watch International is proud to be recognized as the largest harvester and processor of clam products in the world. They realize how powerful their leadership can be in the fight for Global Health.

Sea Watch begins with the wild harvest of two species of clams (Atlantic Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog). They work closely with the National Marine Fisheries to manage their fishery in a sustainable manner. This has been done since 1978 under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which mandates sustainability by virtue of their quota system. The Domestic Offshore Clam industry in the USA is considered by many around the world to be among the best-managed fisheries on the planet.

Sea Watch is reliant on the health of the global environment because their business begins with the wild harvest of two species of clams. Sea Watch has been able to reduce their overall energy usage and now operates their fleet of 30 company owned vessels with low sulfur fuel. Their four processing plants engage in numerous operational strategies, which reduce water usage and recycle water wherever possible. They recycle paper, cardboard, and metals. Even the clam shells are recycled and used for substrate to rebuild the ailing oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay.

The companies' locations are Easton, Maryland (headquarters); Milford, Delaware; New Bedford, Massachusetts; and Mappsville, Virginia.

We learned about the company's background, challenges, and the many companies and restaurants that use their clams, such as Progresso, Campbells, and Red Lobster just to name a few. We toured the plant and saw the process of clams being processed into clam strips. Additionally, we were treated to samples of many of their products, including a product being developed in collaboration with our own Shore Gourmet.

The bus drove back to the MSRC office.

The group was in awe of the visits today. Many of the attendees had no knowledge that the three companies existed, let alone are located in our counties. Consensus on the short trip back to the MSRC was that today was a great learning experience and a wonderful trip all around.

We arrived back at the Mid-Shore Regional Council office at approximately 4:00 p.m.