

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on June 9, 2022. It was held at the Choptank Electric building in Denton, Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Walter Chase, Burton Wilson, Anthony Casey, Lenny Pfeffer, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Frank Divilio, Chuck Callahan, Delegate Johnny Mautz (6 PM arrival), Kurt Fuchs, Senator Addie Eckardt, Dan Franklin, Joyce Harrod, and Talbot County Manager Clay Stamp.

Guests in attendance were: Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Manager Erin Silva; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Melissa Kelly; U.S. Senator Ben Cardin's Field Representative Kim Kratovil; Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser; Easton Town Councilman Al Silverstein; University of Maryland Extension Educator Shannon Dill; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB ) Executive Director Daniel Schneckenburger; Rural Maryland Council (RMC) Program Administrator Megan D'Arcy; USDA Rural Development State Director David Baker; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Coordinator Stephanie Wilkins; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Mike Thielke; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; BEACON Director John Hickman; and Lawrence Harrod. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

### Action Items

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 5:26 p.m. and introductions were made.

#### *Approval of March 3, 2022, Minutes*

The first order of business was to obtain approval for the March 3, 2022, minutes. Ms. Spicher made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Franklin 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 carried unanimously.

#### *Ratification of Executive Board November 24, 2021, Minutes*

The next order of business was to ratify Executive Board minutes from November 24, 2021. Senator Eckardt made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Fuchs 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.

## *Ratification of Executive Board May 5, 2022, Minutes*

The next order of business was to ratify Executive Board minutes from May 5, 2022. Mr. Fuchs made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Divilio 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.

### *Treasurer's Report*

Treasurer Kurt Fuchs presented three reports.

#### *MSRC Operating Budget*

The first report was the MSRC operating budget. He stated that all income and expenses are on track. One final payment is expected from MTA in a week or two and that will complete the income for this year.

#### *Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Budget*

Next, Mr. Fuchs's addressed the RMPIF budget stating nothing has changed since the MSRC meeting on December 8, 2021.

#### *Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 Project Budget*

Mr. Fuch's stated that this project is on track with all partners drawing down funds and monies should be fully expended by the grants end date of June 30, 2022.

Senator Eckardt made a motion to accept all three reports. Ms. Spicher 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 approved unanimously.

### *Approval of FY23 Scope of Work*

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's May 5, 2022, meeting they reviewed the FY23 Scope of Work and then at the Executive Board's May 27, 2022, meeting they reviewed, discussed, and approved for the full Council's consideration the FY23 Scope of Work. Mr. Warner added that there have been no changes to the Scope of Work; it is the same as FY22.

Mr. Fuch's made a motion to approve the Scope of Work 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 stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

### *Approval of FY23 Budget*

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's May 5, 2022, meeting they reviewed and discussed the MSRC's FY23 operating budget. He added that during the Executive Board's May 27, 2022, meeting they reviewed and approved for the full Council's consideration the MSRC's FY23 operating budget. Mr. Warner went through

each funding source stating that on June 3, 2022, the MSRC received an invitation from EDA to submit a new 3-year grant cycle application for the three-year cycle starting on July 1, 2022. The grant is to be submitted by June 10, 2022. Mr. Warner continued through the expenditures explaining any line-item changes as compared to the FY22 budget and the reasoning for such changes.

Senator Eckardt made a motion to approve the budget. Mr. Divilio 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 approved unanimously.

Mr. Franklin left the meeting due to another engagement.

### *Including Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds*

Mr. Warner reminded everyone that the State of Maryland budget included an increase in the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) for FY23 from \$6 million to \$9 million. Therefore, RMPIF will be providing the MSRC with a grant totaling \$600,000. The proposed projects to be supported with MSRC's RMPIF grant are explained in detail in the document entitled Mid-Shore Regional Council's request for funding support in FY2023 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF). This information is in the same form as the actual grant that is being prepared. Previously, this was written after the MSRC's June meeting, but last two year's Mr. Warner presented this document along with the RMPIF budget to the MSRC Executive Board and then the full council. The bodies seem to appreciate this format, so it was repeated this year. The grant is to be submitted by August 1, 2022. The MSRC Executive Board discussed the projects and the budget during their May 5, 2022. During their May 27, 2022, meeting they reviewed, discussed, and approved the MSRC's FY23 RMPIF budget for the full council's consideration.

Mr. Warner then briefly explained each project and its funding amount.

Here is the summary of each project as found in the Mid-Shore Regional Council's request for funding support in FY2023 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) document.

1) Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) \$175,000 – 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 and financial assistance to the startup and entrepreneur ecosystem and the expansion of programs and projects such as the F<sup>3</sup> Tech Accelerator Program, the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, a Food Safety Training Program, and a proposed Chesapeake Farm to Freezer Project and proposed Rural Cooperative Development Center.

2) Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center \$175,000 – 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.

Mr. Warner stated that during the Shore Gourmet Board of Directors meeting on May 20, 2022, 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.

3) DelMarVa Index \$35,000 – Continue working with the 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). The DelMarVa Index will receive guidance from the existing advisory committee, comprised of economic development professionals in each County to determine those datasets that are of the highest priority.

Mr. Warner stated that the recommended funding includes new tools (State Parks Dashboard, Healthcare Cluster Application, and Economic Snapshots) and maintenance of existing tools (Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA tools, workforce infographics, and economic snapshots).

4) Circuit Rider \$30,000 – 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.

Mr. Warner stated that this is to continue the GIS assistance to counties and municipalities. The funding amount is the same as FY22.

5) Mid-Shore Public Safety Dashboard \$23,900 – Public Safety is an important topic for residents, businesses, and community leaders however there is limited access to public safety information at the county and municipal level. Understanding the type of criminal activity occurring in communities and visualizing trends would allow decision makers to anticipate and advocate for future needs such as additional law enforcement resources, emergency service resources, and intervention programs. The publicly accessible Mid-Shore Public Safety Dashboard will enable users to visualize crime data by type in the Mid-Shore counties and major municipalities for five years (2015-2019). The dashboard will also offer regional comparisons for the other six regions in Maryland over this same time period.

6) 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.

7) Summer Career Enrichment Programs \$87,100 – The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) supports the partnership between the PFC Coalition, DCTC, Talbot

County and Caroline County School Systems. The program is designed to engage students in direct 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 engineering, programming, aviation, construction, animation, and graphic design. Instructors will incorporate strategies to teach students on how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business.

Mr. Warner stated that this project will expand on the SCEP that MSRC facilitated and helped fund last year. This year the SCEP will be held at the Dorchester Career and Technology Center and include students from Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties. As the program last year was a pilot program for Dorchester County this year's program is a pilot program for Caroline and Talbot Counties.

Additionally, Mr. Warner shared a very moving story that happened last year during the program held in Dorchester County.

Mr. Warner stated that the MSRC offered tours to members last year and the members that were able to take advantage of the trip were extremely impressed. Mr. Warner said that the MSRC staff will send a notice to the Board regarding visitation for this coming year and encouraged everyone to try and make time in their schedules to attend.

8) 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. Divilio made a motion to approve the RMPF FY23 budget as presented. Ms. Spicher 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 approved unanimously.

## Updates

### *Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund*

MSRC Executive Director Scott Warner gave the following updates:

Mr. Warner sent emails to MSRC membership and economic development directors on February 18, 25, and May 6 regarding the Fund.

Applications open – May 2, 2022.

Applications due from the regional councils to the Maryland Department of Commerce – September 2, 2022.

Funds must be expended within 24 months of the execution of the grant agreement between Maryland Department of Commerce and the regional councils.

During their May 5, 2022, meeting the MSRC Executive Board reviewed the documents and discussed the execution of the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund.

Distribution of funds:

- The MSRC may request up to \$10 million. (\$300,000 can be used for administrative costs. The MSRC will notify the counties how much it will require to administer this program so the remaining balance may be divided equally among the counties.)
  - Initial allocation per county is approximately \$3.233 million.
- Regionally funded projects will be agreed to by all three counties. Regional project funds will be subtracted from the total amount first and the remaining balance divided equally among the counties.

Procedure to develop the MSRC application:

- 1) Distribute this information to the MSRC and economic development directors. (Email sent May 6, 2022)
- 2) The county economic development directors will communicate with their counties (and municipalities) to identify projects for funding.
- 3) The counties will rank the projects to be submitted. (#1 being the most important.)

Note: The MSRC encourages each county to submit more projects than their allotted funds allow to be funded just in case a project(s) does not meet the endorsement criteria.

- 4) The counties will forward their project lists to the MSRC no later than August 12, 2022. (Date subject to change)
- 5) The MSRC will review and endorse the projects to be included in the MSRC grant application.

Note: The MSRC's Executive Board along with the Caroline County Administrator, Dorchester County Manager, and Talbot County Manager will serve as the review/compliance board.

*Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) online*

*Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 Project*

- *Eastern Shore Economic Resiliency Toolkit*

Chairman Chase introduced ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva, who presented a short PowerPoint presentation providing a summary of the nearly completed Eastern Shore Economic Resiliency Toolkit and the newly completed online Mid-Shore CEDS.

First, she showed the various tools within the Economic Resiliency Toolkit and shared how this project ties into the Delmarva Index.

Next, she explained how the online CEDS format allows for constant data updates and more expansive and detailed charts and graphs. She also mentioned that a PDF overview of the CEDS will be added to the site in the near future.

## Discussion

### *Adequacy of water and wastewater systems in the region*

Senator Addie Eckardt her desire to start a discussion about the adequacy of water and wastewater systems in the region. She has been in discussion concerning potential problem, especially with existing and future holding ponds. Due to possible erosion, harmful chemicals could end up in our waterways and streams which could cause a myriad of problems. She suggested creating SWAT teams to work with local entities to figure out a solution before there is a problem. Senator Eckardt also mentioned that \$800 million may be made available from the federal government to state government. If Eastern Shore counties want to access these funds it would be more advantageous to address this problem as an Eastern Shore issue rather than just a county issue. She also stated that the public would be surprised in all the hidden costs to maintain a water and wastewater systems/facilities.

There was no further input from the Council, but the Senator mentioned that this public infrastructure is part of the CEDS goals and may be further discussed by the CEDS Committee.

### Announcements/comments

There were no announcements or comments.

### Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.