

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on December 6, 2023. It was held at the Hyatt in Cambridge, Maryland prior to the joint luncheon.

MSRC members in attendance included: Walter Chase, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Chris Adams, Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Ricky Travers, Lenny Pfeffer, Mike Detmer, Rob Kramer, Jerome Stanley, Joyce Harrod, Kurt Fuchs, Frank Bartz, Larry Porter, Travis Breeding, Chuck Callahan, Peter Leshar, Dan Rider, Maria D'Arcy, Steve Rideout, Caroline County Administrator Kathleen Freeman, Dorchester County Manager Jeff Powell, and Talbot County Manager Clay Stamp.

Guests in attendance were: Salisbury University Dean and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott; University of Maryland Extension Educator Shannon Dill; Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser; Caroline County Economic Development and Tourism Director Debbie Bowden; Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis; Chesapeake College Director of Development Amber McGinnis; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham; Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) Executive Director John Hartline; Ryan Snow (consultant, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Easton Utilities); Congressman Andy Harris' Operations & District Outreach Director Keith Graffius; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) Executive Director Daniel Schneckenburger; Choptank Electric Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau; CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; BEACON Director John Hickman; SG Insights, LLC principal Sarah Guy; U.S. Senator Chris Van's Hollen Eastern Shore Regional Director Alyssa Hastings; Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC) Program Director Emiliano Espinosa; Comptroller of Maryland Public Engagement Officer – Eastern Shore Mary Handley; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representatives Mindie Burgoyne and Nancy LaJoice; USDA Rural Development Community Programs Director Terry Fearins, People for Change Coalition (PFCC) Founder/Business Development Jerry McLaurin; Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) Executive Director Matt Leonard; Chesapeake College Board of Trustees Chair and Talbot County Economic Development Commission Past Chair Reza Jafari; and St. Michaels resident Lawrence Harrod. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. and introductions were made. Pete Leshar was carrying a proxy for Lynn Mielke.

Action Items

Approval of September 14, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the minutes. 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.

Ratification of Executive Board May 26, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Stanley made a motion to ratify the minutes. 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.

Treasurer's Report

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

MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated all expenditures and income with the exception of EDA are on track. EDA has a new reporting system and they are currently working out the kinks, but we expect payment shortly.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that all funds have been distributed as listed.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Report.

- After Mr. Fuchs directed everyone's attention to the report sheet, he deferred to Mr. Warner. Mr. Warner stated that the only changes that have been made since the last quarterly meeting are to the Administration categories of MSRC attorney and Project Consultant. He further stated that Dorchester County still has \$60,000 available under Administration. Caroline County and Talbot County have claimed their funds in this category.

Mr. Fuchs asked if anyone had any questions on any of the reports, if not a motion could be made to accept.

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve all three reports 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 saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Officer Selection

Mr. Warner stated that at their last meeting held on November 21, 2023, the MSRC Executive Board members discussed and are unanimously recommending the proposed slate for the 2024 officers of the MSRC.

He further explained the automatic changes to the Vice Chair positions that occur due to the MSRC By-Laws. They are 1st Vice Chair will be Dorchester County, 2nd Vice Chair will be Talbot County, and 3rd Vice Chair will be Caroline County. Additionally, the General Assembly member will be Senator Johnny Mautz.

- 2024 Proposed Executive Board Members
 - Chairman: Walter Chase
 - First Vice-Chairman: Ricky Travers (Dorchester)
 - Second Vice-Chairman: Chuck Callahan (Talbot)
 - Third Vice-Chairman: Frank Bartz (Caroline)
 - Secretary: James Redman
 - Treasurer: Kurt Fuchs
 - General Assembly: Johnny Mautz
 - Member-at-large: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio
 - Member-at-large: Bill Christopher

Chairman Chase asked if anyone had any suggestions or changes. Hearing none, Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to accept the proposed slate. Ms. Spicher 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.

Updates / Discussions

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF)

Mr. Warner stated that most of the projects are underway, and some are already completed. He then called on Sarah Guy, MSRC's consultant who is assisting in the management of the RMEDF, she monitors and tracks the projects then creates the reports for the MSRC and the reports the MSRC submits to the Maryland Department of Commerce. Dr. Guy stated that there are a total of 27 projects that she tracks and of those projects, 5 are already completed. The second bi-annual report to Commerce is currently being prepared and is due at the end of December. Dr. Guy reminded all sub-recipients in attendance of the earlier reporting deadline this month.

Mr. Warner called on each of the County Economic Development Directors to give a brief update of their counties' projects.

Debbie Bowden provided an overview of the 7 projects in Caroline County. Susan Banks gave a status report on the 7 projects in Dorchester County. Cassandra Vanhooser gave an update of the 14 projects in Talbot County.

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner shared that this past year was year 3 for the Summer Career Enrichment Program. He then showed a video of this past year (summer 2023) with the group. After the video, Mr. Warner introduced the SCEP administrator Jerry McLaurin to offer his thoughts. Mr. McLaurin's enthusiasm for the program was contagious. He shared the excitement of the students and how the SCEP has positively impacted them and the growth potential to reach many more students with the continued support of the Council and mid-shore public school systems. The classes help students with how to become an

entrepreneur and requisite skills needed to start a business, working on teams, delivering presentations, interviewing techniques, time management, project management, leadership development and problem solving. Students are exposed to career professionals in computer science, cyber, engineering, programming, aviation, construction media, and TV production. Mr. McLaurin stated that he is honored to work with the MSRC on offering the SCEP to mid-shore students.

Mr. Warner added that a meeting with the mid-shore superintendents was held on 10/24/23 at the MSRC office. Attendees were:

- Derek Simmons, Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools
- Dave Bromwell, Superintendent, Dorchester County Public Schools
- Sharon Pepukayi, Superintendent, Talbot County Public Schools
- Walter Chase, Chairman, Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Scott Warner, Executive Director, Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Sandy Pruitt, Executive Director, People for Change Coalition (via web conference)
- Jerry McLaurin, Founder, People for Change Coalition (via web conference)

During the meeting the location of the 2024 SCEP was discussed. The Dorchester County Technology Center (DCTC) will not be the location in 2024 as Dorchester County Public Schools needs to do a deep clean of the building. Dr. Pepukayi and Dr. Simmons both offered for their school systems' to be the host. A few weeks later, Dr. Pepukayi and Dr. Simmons agreed to have Caroline County Public School System host the 2024 SCEP. The dates of the 2024 SCEP are not set yet. The SCEP Committee will determine the dates. The superintendents suggested their Career Coaches (working on Blueprint for Maryland) be included on the SCEP planning committee. The total number of slots (including both sessions) will remain 300. Additionally, it was determined that satellite locations would be detrimental at this point in the program. The SCEP needs to be in one location to build community among the students in the three counties.

Mr. Warner shared that he and Chairman Chase recently visited the Dream Big Academy held at Mace's Lane Middle School and Cambridge-South Dorchester High School (Cambridge-South Dorchester High School). Dream Big Academy Program Directors Chris Branch (Mace's Lane Middle School) and Lashawn Tucker (CSDHS) invited them. Chairman Chase and Mr. Warner had a chance to meet with several of the middle school students who attended the SCEP over the last two years. High school students participated in an ambassador program with the SCEP this year. Dream Big Academy wants to continue partnering with the SCEP.

Mr. Warner also highlighted the communication between the MSRC, People for Change (PFC) Coalition, St. Michaels Community Center, and Tilghman Area Youth Association (TAYA). The St. Michaels Community Center Youth Coordinator Anthony Smith reached out to Mr. Warner several months ago and this has sparked productive meetings with the MSRC, PFC Coalition, the community center and TAYA. The community center and TAYA want to work with the MSRC and SCEP committee to promote the 2024 SCEP. They also want to work with the MSRC and PFC Coalition to offer after school programs and summer programs (and clubs) to support the various topics/programs being explored during the SCEP.

Chairman Chase offered a special thanks to Dorchester County and the Dorchester County community for hosting the SCEP for the last several years.

Maryland Broadband Cooperative

Mr. Drew Van Dopp, Maryland Broadband Cooperative President & CEO, gave a presentation while sharing a brief slide show. He highlighted the impressive progress the MdBC has made since its inception over 17 years ago. Mr. Van Dopp showed the expansiveness of the fiber network and mentioned the importance of MdBC's service to private industries and public infrastructure to the rural parts of Maryland. He highlighted various State and federal grant awards given to the MdBC. He thanked the MSRC and mid-shore counties for supporting the MdBC's recent technology upgrades providing grant funds from the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund. Mr. Van Dopp also thanked the Eastern Shore Delegation for its efforts to modify the State BEAD (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment) Plan funding to include partnerships with middle mile providers such as the MdBC, upon which the region's Internet Service Providers (ISPs) depend.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner asked everyone to note the following upcoming meetings.

2024 tentative MSRC Meeting Dates are in your packets. The dates are:

- Thursday, March 7, 2024 – Talbot County
- Thursday, June 13, 2024 – Caroline County
- Thursday, September 12, 2024 – MSRC Meeting & Tour
- Wednesday, December 11, 2024 – Dorchester County (during Winter MACo)

The next Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be held on January 4, 2024 (Thursday) at 12:00pm at the Easton Firehouse.

The "Taste of the Eastern Shore" legislative reception will be held on February 8, 2024 (Thursday) at 5:30pm at the Graduate Annapolis.

Member comments/requests

Mr. Warner stated that on November 13, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Annapolis during the 2023 Maryland Rural Impact Awards, Chairman Walter Chase was recognized for his achievements. He was honored as the Rural Community Volunteer.

Mr. Warner shared a list of the community volunteer positions that Chairman Chase has invested his time over the years. Next, Senator Johnny Mautz, Speaker Pro Tem - Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate Chris Adams, and Delegate Hutchinson presented Chairman Chase with proclamations from the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates and shared several kind words.

Chairman Chase voiced his appreciation and surprise, as this was all planned well in advance and not on the meeting agenda.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m. by unanimous consent.