

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on March 9, 2023. It was held at the Easton Fire House in Easton, Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Frank Bartz, Lenny Pfeffer, Chuck Callahan, Lynn Mielke, Pete Leshner, Steve Rideout, Maria D'Arcy, Carolyn Spicher, Dan Franklin, James Redman, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, and Kurt Fuchs.

Guests in attendance were: U.S. Senator Ben Cardin's Field Representative Kim Kratovil; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Alyssa Hastings; Salisbury University Dean and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott; ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva; 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; Town of Easton Councilman Al Silverstein; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) Executive Director Daniel Schneckenburger; Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham; Delmarva Community Services President and CEO Santo Grande; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; Upper Shore Aging Executive Director Andy Hollis; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Shore Gourmet Project Manager Pamela Meredith; BEACON Director John Hickman; SG Insights, llc principal Sarah Guy; TEDCO Rural Business Innovation Initiative Mentor Bill Bernard; Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce; Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) Executive Director Matt Leonard; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representatives Mindie Burgoyne and Nancy LaJoyce; Chesapeake College Board of Trustees Vice Chairman and Talbot County Economic Development Commission Past Chairman Reza Jafari; Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Board President Tony Kern; Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC) Program Director Emiliano Espinosa; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan, Easton Economic Development Corporation Director of Strategic Initiatives Deena Kilmon; and Secretary of Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

In Chairman Walter Chase's absence, first vice-chairman Chuck Callahan called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m. and introductions were made. Vice-Chairman Callahan was in possession of proxies from Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Chris Adams, and Delegate Tom Hutchinson. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Ricky Travers, Anthony Casey, Bill Christopher, and Dan Rider. He was also in possession of proxies from Senator John Mautz and Delegate Chris Adams.

Action Items

Approval of December 8, 2022, Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval for the December 8, 2022, minutes. Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to accept the minutes. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. Mr. Callahan stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye, any opposed? Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously.

Ratification of revised CEDS document

The next order of business was to ratify the revised CEDS document.

Mr. Warner stated that all MSRC voting members and County Administrator/Managers are part of the CEDS Committee.

The Full CEDS Committee met on October 12, 2022. At that meeting they were reminded that the 1st CEDS document was submitted to EDA on October 16, 2002. They were notified of the 2022 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award given to the MSRC on October 17 at the Impact Awards reception at NADO's 2022 Annual Training Conference in Pittsburgh, PA. It is highlighted on NADO's new website and highlighted in an online StoryMap released during the conference (October 15-18, 2022). The committee received updates of the 32 projects in the Action Plan. The GPRA Data Collection period FY22 (7/1/21 to 6/30/22) reported:

- 23 projects reported funding, jobs, and/or investment activity
- 329.00 estimated number of jobs created or retained

During the meeting the committee reviewed and revised the CEDS Goals and Objectives and reviewed the progress status of CEDS Action Plan.

The CEDS Executive Committee met on November 28, 2022. At this meeting they evaluated proposed projects. One project will be worked on collaboratively by the counties' economic development offices to support and execute the project. They want to talk with the ESRGC and determine if it is a GIS Circuit Rider project. One project was removed from consideration by their champion and may be resubmitted at a later time. Six projects were unanimously supported to be forwarded to the CEDS Committee for consideration.

January 9, 2023, the full CEDS Committee had their second meeting of the year. During the meeting the following occurred:

- Modifications were approved to update Goals and Objectives:
 - Goal 1, Objective 5
 - Goal 3
- Six projects were unanimously approved for inclusion in the document
 - Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum Master Plan
 - Data Center Shell Building
 - Chesapeake Harvest Produce Processing and Aggregation Facility
 - F3 Tech Agbiotechnology Manufacturing Facility
 - Chesapeake College – The Future Works Workforce Training Initiative
 - Regional Mental Health Workforce Training and Community Outreach Center
- Removal of existing projects from CEDS Action Plan

- Development of the “Tilghman Island Discovery Park”
- Chesapeake Harvest
- Chesapeake College Associate of Applied Science in Agriculture (completed)
- 35 projects are included in the revised documents’ Action Plan

Mr. Warner then thanked many for their assistance in revising the CEDS:

- ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva and GIS Analyst Nastya Suprunova for updating the CEDS online and printable version including the statistical sections
- ESRGC GIS Programmer Tim Lanzi for all the computer programming
- USWIB Executive Director Dan Schneckenburger assisting with unemployment data found under “Our Region”
- Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business development Representative Nancy LaJoice assisting with Tax Credits and Incentives found under “Resources”

Updates made to the online Mid-Shore CEDS

- Goals & Objectives (as stated above)
- Action Plan (as stated above)
- About
- Background
- History
- Partners
- Our Region
- Demographic & Socioeconomic
 - Population
 - Minority Population
 - Educational Attainment
 - Income and Poverty
 - Wages
 - Unemployment
 - Mobile Workforce
 - Business Establishments
 - Housing
 - Major Industry Clusters
 - Tourism
 - Health
 - Economy
 - Factors Affecting Economic Performance
 - Resources
 - Tax Credits and Incentives

Mr. Warner stated that the link to the revised CEDS online was e-mailed to you on March 6, 2023, with this meeting’s agenda.

The MSRC will submit the updated CEDS document to the EDA Philadelphia office once ratified and posted on the website for public comment for 30 days.

The updated document can be viewed:

- through the MSRC website www.midshore.org
 - click on “About”, “Documents”, then “Visit CEDS online”

- Or the direct link <https://ceds.midshore.org>

Mr. Fuchs made a motion to ratify the CEDS document. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. Mr. Callahan stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye, any opposed? Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Kurt Fuchs presented the following financial reports:

MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that all income and expenses are on track.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Next, Mr. Fuchs addressed the RMPIF budget stating nothing has changed since the MSRC meeting on December 8, 2022.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) Budget

- During this report Mr. Fuchs deferred to Mr. Warner to explain the details.

Mr. Warner stated that of the \$10,000,000 received all monies have been distributed to the Counties with the exception of the administration fees. Of these fees \$180,000 is allocated to the counties (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot). Each county is planned to receive \$60,000. The counties have been made aware of the availability of the funds and they will draw it down when needed. The remaining administration fees are to cover the costs of the MSRC's administration expenses to administer the RMEDF, e.g., legal, and accounting, and project consultant.

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to accept all three reports. Mr. Redman seconded the motion. Mr. Callahan stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye, any opposed? Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously.

Authorizing Resolution to file an application with the MTA for a FY24 Statewide Coordination and Technical Assistance Grant (SCATA)

Mr. Warner stated the MSRC received an email on January 18, 2023, from the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) regarding solicitation information for a Statewide Coordination and Technical Assistance Grant (SCATA).

- The solicitation encompasses the 12-month period for FY2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024).
- The grant application submittal deadline is April 21, 2023, at 3:30pm.
- The MSRC has been applying for and administering this grant for many years to support the Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST) program.
- The grant request amount is \$40,000. (The same amount it has been since FY08.) These funds are matched by county funds (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot).
- The MTA process requires an authorizing resolution.

Mr. Warner informed the Council that the resolution is in their meeting packets. This is a standard resolution that the MTA has requested over the past several years that the MSRC has applied for this grant.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve the authorizing resolution. Mr. Pfeffer seconded the motion. Mr. Callahan stated that we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye, any opposed? Ayes have it. Motion passed unanimously.

Updates

Annie's Project

Mr. Callahan introduced Shannon Dill, Maryland Cooperative Extension Educator, to provide an update on Annie's Project. Ms. Dill thanked the MSRC for their support of the Women in Ag program. She stated classes offered include Recordkeeping and Cash Flow for Farm Businesses (2 classes had 62 participants). Annie's Project classes statewide had 28 registrants and 14 FSA borrowers for the virtual classes. Wednesday Webinars are held twice a month and have 40 – 80 registrants per online seminar. She did note that attendance has dropped off a bit since COVID. Ms. Dill added USDA Census reports over 37% of farmers are women and a broader number are ag professionals. They did their annual Farm Tour, where they had 43 participants and visited three locations: Ferry Cove Oyster Hatchery, West Sherwood Farms, and the Town of St. Michaels. Their mailing list includes over 1,500 Women in Ag, 2.4K Followers.

Shore Gourmet (SG) / Chesapeake Culinary Center partnership (CCC)

Mr. Callahan introduced Beth Brewster, Executive Director of CCC. Ms. Brewster also stated she works for the Caroline County School System, and she concentrates on feeding the area's youth. SG and CCC are part of a regional food resiliency effort – Chesapeake Food Connection. The mission is to create healthy, economically stable families through food equity, job training, youth prevention, economic development, and education.

Shore Gourmet is integral to this effort that is working on several projects including:

- Re-purposing vacant poultry houses.
- Utilizing Blue Catfish to not only feed people economically but help the health of the Bay.
- Farm to Freezer Project – helping to make healthy food choices year-round not just when products are in season. This also serves as a supplemental income for seasonal cafeteria workers in the school systems.

Mr. Warner stated that a tour has been arranged for April 12 for anyone who is interested in seeing firsthand all the projects Shore Gourmet is involved. If you are interested, please reach out to Terry or Scott for details.

Delmarva Index

Mr. Callahan introduced Erin Silva, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Manager.

Ms. Silva shared the following with the group. Many of the tools are interactive and are able to be downloaded or saved. This makes them easy to use for reports, grants, etc. These have been shown to be valuable tools.

- Agricultural Census Infographics – this data is available for each county in the Delmarva.
- Workforce Infographics – available for each Delmarva County and over 100 municipalities.
- Economic Snapshots – for each the Mid and Lower Shore county.

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner provided the following update.

- This year's committee consists of representatives from the following organizations:
 - Mid-Shore Regional Council
 - People for Change Coalition
 - Caroline County Public Schools
 - Dorchester County Public Schools
 - Talbot County Public Schools
 - Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center
 - Rural Maryland Council
 - BAAM (Building African American Minds)
 - Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center
 - SMYLE (St. Michaels Police Department)
 - Foundation of HOPE
 - YMCA of the Chesapeake
 - Chesapeake College
 - Shore Gourmet
 - Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
- Programs to be offered
 - 1) Animation for Youth
 - 2) App Development for Youth
 - 3) Drone Technology for Youth
 - 4) Graphic and Presentation Design for Youth
 - 5) Making the Right Moves Chess Immersion Program
 - 6) Media Arts and Video Editing
 - 7) Youth Cyber Security Program

Possible new programs

- 8) Construction
 - 9) Aviation
- Grade levels
 - Students finishing grades 6, 7, 8 (rising 7, 8, 9 graders)
 - If still space, students finishing 5 grade (rising 6 graders)
 - Session dates

- Two 2-week sessions (Monday thru Thursday)
- July 10 thru July 20
- July 24 thru August 3
- Fundraising
 - Mr. Warner asked to please let the MSRC office know if you have interested parties that would like to sponsor the program. He stated flyers are in your packets regarding (1) Corporate and Foundation Support and (2) Small Business Support.
- Promotion
 - Mr. Warner asked everyone to share the video of the 2022 SCEP. It was the video that was played right before this meeting was called to order. If you need the link to the video, please contact the MSRC office. It has been shared with everyone via email.
 - He also stated promotional flyers are in your meeting packets.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF)

Mr. Warner provided the following update regarding the RMEDF.

Projects have started. Of the 28 total projects, 17 have activity and 11 have not started.

- Caroline has 7 projects; 4 have started.
- Dorchester has 7 projects; 4 have started.
- Talbot has 14 projects; 9 have started, 1 will start in the Fall 2023, and 2 will start in mid-Summer 2023.

Mr. Warner stated that the counties' economic development directors have been doing a great job communicating with him and project consultant Dr. Sarah Guy. Dr. Guy will be collecting information and providing monthly progress reports which the MSRC office will share via their monthly activity report. It will be a separate attachment. Mr. Warner thanked Dr. Guy and the county economic development directors for all their work and assistance on managing the RMEDF and its projects.

Maryland General Assembly

Mr. Warner provided the following update.

2023 Legislative session

- Funding – FY2024 Budget
 - Mr. Warner was told that the regional councils are level funded in the Governor's budget.
 - RMPFI and MAERDAF are both level funded in the Governor's proposed budget.
 - The House Appropriations Committee will be voting on the budget soon.
- Rural Communities Improvement Act of 2023

- This bill's full title is Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund – Revisions and Sunset Repeal (Rural Communities Improvement Act of 2023). The bills sponsors are Speaker Pro Tem - Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes and Delegate Chris Adams.
- The bill had a hearing in the House on February 24, and it went well. Follow up is being done.
- The reason for this bill is the RMC is seeking technical updates to the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF). These updates include the following:
 - Removes the 2030 sunset for the RMPIF
 - Replaces 'may' with 'shall' for the Governor to include an appropriation of at least \$1,000,000 to the RMPIF
 - Clarifies that only State recognized rural regional councils are eligible for RMPIF
 - Adds Cooperative Development and Workforce Development as focus areas under Rural Entrepreneurship and Agricultural Development
 - Updates the hold harmless clause to match what the Council currently receives.
 - Includes text that the Executive Committee must concur with any reallocations of grant funds from one fund to the other.
- Other Legislation Issues

Charlotte Davis, Rural Maryland Council Executive Director, was going to provide this presentation in person; however, during the time of this meeting she was testifying on HB718 – Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Eligible Sources – Alterations (Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023). Therefore, she provided the following for Mr. Warner to share.

- Regarding HB718
 - Ms. Davis is reading Maryland Forestry Association Executive Director Beth Hill's testimony against the bill. Ms. Hill is out of state regarding a family issue. This is an unfavorable testimony summarizing:
 - Increase the amount of waste (both wood and municipal) that is sent to landfills and/or trucked out of State to locations with less stringent environmental regulations for disposal, increasing methane emissions from landfills and CO2 emissions from transportation
 - Reduce jobs in sectors such as renewable energy, logging, transportation, chipping, waste management, and forestry
 - Prevent Maryland from reaching its environmental goals by 2030 and beyond
 - Preemptively disqualifies biomass from being considered for Thermal Renewable Energy Credits (TREC's), despite high efficiencies and stringent regulations.
 - Foreclose opportunities provided by the recent Public Service Commission (PSC) decision to approve Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) for thermal biomass systems.

- HB596/SB511 - Health and Human Services Transportation Improvement Act of 2023
 - Legislation is an outcome of the roundtables the RMC and TCC Southern Maryland hosted in Fall of 2022
 - Establishes a rural health transportation pilot program in the Maryland Department of Health
 - Lifts the funding caps (\$500,000) for the Senior Rides and the Job Access and Reverse Commute programs
 - Reestablishes and codifies a state coordinating committee at the Mass Transit Administration to allow the industry sectors to communicate with each other
 - Testified in support at the hearings held in the Senate Finance Committee on 2/22 and the House Health and Government Operations Committee on 2/28

- HB551/SB547 – Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023 (Governor’s bill)
 - Authorizes an income tax subtraction modification for entities that have received federal or state grant funds for broadband expansion projects
 - Authorizes a sale and use tax exemption on broadband equipment purchases
 - These tax strategies were recommended in 2018 by the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless and Cellular Services
 - Testified in support at the hearings held in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee on 3/1 and in the House Ways and Means Committee on 2/16

- HB552/SB549-Economic Development - Build Our Future Grant Pilot Program and Fund (Innovation Economy Infrastructure Act of 2023) (Governor’s bill)
 - Establishes the Build Our Future Grant (BOFG) Pilot Program and Fund (BOFGF) in the Department of Commerce to provide grant funding for infrastructure projects intended to support innovation in eligible technology sectors
 - Agriculture is an eligible technology sector
 - Grants of up to \$2.0 million may be awarded to private companies, nonprofits, local governments, or colleges and universities in the State and may be used to defray specified costs associated with an eligible innovation infrastructure project
 - Submitted support testimony; hearings held in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee on 3/1 and in the House Ways and Means Committee on 2/16

Rural Maryland Day in Annapolis

- The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) held Rural Maryland Day on February 9, 2023. Several teams of rural Maryland supporters met with State of Maryland Senators and Delegates virtually. They thanked legislators for their support of rural Maryland and the RMC. They also

expressed the vital importance of the grant programs administered by the RMC – RMPIF and MAERDAF.

Additionally, the teams conveyed the RMC's:

- Thanks to the Governor for including RMPIF in the proposed FY24 Operating Budget
- FY24 budget priorities which include
 - keeping the proposed \$9 million investment in the RMPIF in the State budget (level funding from last year)
 - MAERDAF – level funding
 - RMC – continued support of RMC operating expenses
 - Regional Councils – level funding
 - MARBIDCO funding
 - Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program
- Legislative priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session:
 - Broadband and Infrastructure
 - Transportation
 - Rural Economic Development
 - Rural Workforce Development
 - Viable Agriculture, Aquaculture, Forestry & Rural Communities
 - Public Safety
 - Rural Health

"Taste of the Eastern Shore" legislative reception

Greg Padgham, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Executive Director, stated the event was held on February 9, 2023, at Graduate Annapolis Hotel. It was the reception's 19th year. The first one was held January 2003 and they did not hold a reception in 2021 or 2022 because of coronavirus pandemic. He stated the event was well attended and thanked the MSRC for continuing to be a partner and sponsor.

Guest speaker

Newly appointed Secretary of Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Kevin Atticks presented an overview of issues that he sees as important to the agricultural community. The top goal is making the industry more profitable. This goal can help preserve farming, curb development, and have kids come back to the farm. He stressed that it is important that entities work together to achieve various goals. He stated that farmers were the original conservationists and environmentalists. He further commented that farmers/ag have similar goals as environmentalists, they just operate differently. He wants MDA and other agencies to be proactive. He complimented Ms. Silva for her presentation earlier and stated that he had already downloaded some of her graphs.

The MSRC was very grateful the Secretary was able to make time to speak to the Council and its guests.

Member comments/requests

Mr. Warner introduced Emiliano Espinosa, Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center's (CAIC) Program Director. Mr. Espinosa stated that the CAIC

works with value added producers in the state of Maryland and Delaware through its Producers Startup Program. The program is designed for idea or early state producers. He wanted to share an invite for March 22, 2023, at an event where producers will be presenting their businesses and products. The event is taking place at the Maryland Department of Agriculture in Annapolis and will begin at 10:00 a.m. MDA Secretary Kevin Atticks will be speaking. Everyone is invited to attend.

Adjourn

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:02 p.m.