

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on June 8, 2023. It was held at the Choptank Electric building in Denton, Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Anthony Casey, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Dan Rider, Dan Franklin, Delegate Chris Adams, Frank Bartz, James Redman, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Joyce Harrod, Maria D'Arcy, Senator Johnny Mautz, Steve Rideout, Walter Chase, Clay Stamp, and Addie Eckardt.

Guests in attendance were: Salisbury University Dean and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott; ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva; 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; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) Executive Director Daniel Schneckenburger; Chesapeake College Director of Development Amber McGinnis; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Shore Gourmet Project Manager Pamela Meredith; SG Insights, LLC principal Sarah Guy; Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce; Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Mike Thielke; Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC) Program Director Emiliano Espinosa; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan; Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis; USDA Rural Development for Delaware and Maryland State Director Dave Baker; USDA Rural Development Deputy State Director Letitia Nichols; Choptank Electric Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau; CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly; Congressman Andy Harris' Community Liaison Mike Arntz; Ryan Snow (consultant, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Easton Utilities); Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracy Snyder; People for Change Coalition (PFCC) Executive Director Sandra Pruitt; PFCC Founder/Business Development Jerry McLaurin; and Lawrence Harrod of St. Michaels. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 5:26 p.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was carrying a proxy for Delegate Tom Hutchinson. Mr. Stamp was carrying proxies for Chuck Callahan and Lynn Mielke. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Ricky Travers and Lenny Pfeffer.

Action Items

Approval of March 9, 2023, Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval for the March 9, 2023, minutes. Delegate Adams made a motion to accept the minutes. 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.

Ratification of Executive Board November 23, 2022, Minutes

Ms. Spicher made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Stamp 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 January 4, 2023, Minutes

Mayor Rideout made a motion to ratify 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 February 2, 2023, Minutes

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

Ratification of Executive Board March 29, 2023, Minutes

Ms. Haddaway-Riccio made a motion to ratify the minutes. 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.

Treasurer's Report

In Treasurer Kurt Fuchs' absence, Secretary James Redman presented the three reports.

MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Redman stated all expenditures and income are on track for this time of year.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Mr. Redman stated that the RMPIF budget report has not changed since the MSRC meeting on March 9, 2023.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) Budget

- Mr. Redman deferred to Mr. Warner for explanation. Mr. Warner explained the disbursements of the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund monies, highlighting that Caroline County and Talbot County have recently executed addendums to their MOUs with the MSRC regarding the additional \$60,000 each provided for administration. Dorchester has not requested their portion of those funds yet.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to accept all three reports as presented. Mr. Stamp 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.

Approval of FY24 Scope of Work

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's May 26, 2023, meeting they reviewed, discussed, and approved for the full Council's consideration the FY24 Scope of Work. He noted that the items that are grey highlighted are to be deleted, while the items that have yellow highlighting are to be added.

Mr. Warner described the proposed changes:

Page 2, Objective 2, Deliverable bullet 5

- Change "Monitor the State of Maryland's Rural Health Collaborative Pilot (created by Senate Bill 1056 during the 2018 General Assembly Session) particularly the stated purpose to "Enhance rural economic development in the mid-shore region.""
to
"Monitor the State of Maryland's Mid Shore Health Improvement Coalition (created by Senate Bill 498 during the 2023 General Assembly Session) particularly the final stated purpose to "Enhance rural economic development in the mid-shore region."

Page 3, Objective 4, Action 4

- Change "Examine the interest and viability of establishing regional technology programs/school"
to
"Support the expansion of regional trades and technical programs"

Page 3, Objective 4, Deliverable bullet 7

- "Assist in the establishment of a study to determine the feasibility of a regional technology school or utilizing Chesapeake College in offering regional technology programs"
to
"Assist Chesapeake College with the development of the trades programs and new Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship as appropriate"

Senator Mautz made a motion to approve the FY24 Scope of Work with the suggested changes as described. Ms. Harrod 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.

Mr. Franklin left the meeting to get to another engagement.

Approval of FY24 Budget

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's May 26, 2023, meeting they reviewed and approved for the full Council's consideration the MSRC's FY24 operating budget. Mr. Warner went through each funding source stating that on June 7, 2023, the MSRC received an invitation from EDA to submit a grant cycle application for this coming year, starting on July 1, 2023. Mr. Warner continued through the expenditures explaining any line-item changes as compared to the FY23 budget and the reasoning for such changes.

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the budget as presented. Mr. Rider 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.

Including Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds

Mr. Warner reminded everyone that the State of Maryland budget included \$9 million in the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) for FY24. The same amount as this past year. Therefore, RMPIF will be providing the MSRC with a grant totaling \$600,000. He thanked the Governor and legislators for continuing to support the RMPIF.

Mr. Warner then stated that 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 FY2024 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF). This document was included in the meeting packet. During the Executive Board's May 26, 2023, meeting they reviewed, discussed, and approved for the full Council's consideration the MSRC's FY24 RMPIF budget.

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

1) Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) - \$165,000

This is continued support and partnership with the MSRC created ESEC.

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 assistance, business services, and financial assistance to the startup and entrepreneur ecosystem and the expansion of programs and projects such as the F³ Tech Accelerator Program, the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, a Food Safety Training Program, and a developing Produce and Seafood Processing Facility and an Agbiotech Manufacturing Facility.

2) Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center - \$165,000

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.

During the Shore Gourmet Board of Directors meeting on May 23, 2023, 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 - \$9,500

This is a continued partnership with The Tri County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore (TCCLES). The recommended funding includes maintenance of several tools (Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA tools (tax revenue, tourism, and hubsite applications), Healthcare Facilities Map, State Parks Dashboard, Public Safety Dashboard, Workforce Infographics (county, municipal, commute area), and Economic Snapshots).

4) Circuit Rider - \$30,000

This is to continue the GIS assistance to counties and municipalities. The funding amount is the same as FY23.

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.

5) Agricultural Reporting Application - \$10,500

In partnership with University of Maryland Agricultural Extension, TCCLES, Upper Shore Regional Council, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, and Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, develop an application that will provide an alternative workflow to agricultural producers that will streamline and enhance record keeping and will help compile information for state and federal reporting requirements. The application will provide a free and publicly accessible resource for producers to track and visualize farm data.

6) MUST Bus Website Redesign and Redevelopment - \$46,000

The current MUST site was last upgraded in 2016. This proposed redevelopment will allow MUST to take advantage of the latest in web design, desktop and mobile development and mapping technologies such as Next.js, Vercel, ESRI and Google Maps. These technologies will enhance the stability of the site by allowing the ESRGC to update software patches and upgrades more easily and will increase the types of features and functionality that can be extended to the end user. Along with a new modern website design, the ESRGC will also add interactive mapping functionality to the site.

7) 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.

8) Summer Career Enrichment Programs - \$100,000

The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) supports the partnership between the PFC Coalition, DCTC, Dorchester County, Talbot County and Caroline County School Systems. The program is designed to engage students in hands-on 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 computer science, cyber, engineering, programming, aviation, construction, media, and TV production. Instructors will incorporate strategies to teach students how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business.

9) 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. Redman made a motion to approve the RMPF FY24 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 saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Project Updates

Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC)

Chairman Chase introduced ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva, who presented a short PowerPoint presentation providing overviews of some of the dashboards and tools that the MSRC invested in this past year (FY23).

- Economic Snapshots
- State Parks Dashboard
- Healthcare Facilities Map
- Mid-Shore Public Safety Dashboard

She used the presentation to demonstrate how to navigate the tools. The MSRC will be providing weblinks to these tools via an email that will be distributed in the near future.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

Chairman Chase then introduced ESEC Executive Director Mike Thielke. Mr. Thielke explained the activities and progress of two of ESEC's initiatives: F3 Tech Accelerator and Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center.

F3 Tech was started in 2018. It is a 6-month program that assists 5 companies per year. The companies' industry focus has to be in agriculture, aquaculture, energy, environment, or supply chain. This commercialization incubator program's focus is to:

- Expedite commercialization
- Accelerate manufacturing, customer acquisition, and revenue development
- Attract top innovators that match our industry partner commercial needs
- Invest in innovations with grants, private funding, and executive support
- Evaluate technologies for diversification in other sectors

Mr. Thielke highlighted several of the companies' performance outcomes that have participated from 2019 to the present. He then explained how the momentum and growth of F3 Tech has led ESEC to begin the creation of an agbiotech manufacturing facility on the mid-shore. Initial funding support provided by Talbot County utilizing the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund.

Next, Mr. Thielke provided an overview of the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center (CAIC). CAIC was established in 2020. CAIC's mission is to provide value-added agriculture and aquaculture producers in Maryland and Delaware with the advice, guidance, technical assistance, and business services they need to scale their businesses to a viable level of success. This ensures a secure living for producers and sufficient nutritious, local food

that is readily available to consumers. He explained CAIC's three pillars (Producers Business Services, Producers Startup Program, and Producers Growth Program) and the types of assistance provided by the roster of 12-plus industry mentors and business consultants that work with CAIC.

Mr. Thielke praised Emiliano Espinosa for his efforts in leading the CAIC. He then shared performance outcome highlights:

- 65 clients engaged
- 189 workshops
- \$75,000 in loans made
- \$29,500 in 11 mini-grants awarded
- 45 developed business plans
- 30 industry benchmark reports
- 1 producer accepted into Union Kitchen (Washington, D.C. food business incubator)

Announcements/comments

There were no announcements or comments.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 6:44 p.m.