

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on December 11, 2024. It was held at the Hyatt in Cambridge, Maryland prior to the joint luncheon.

MSRC members in attendance included: Allen Nelson, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Jerome Stanley, Kurt Fuchs, Ricky Travers, Lenny Pfeffer, Mike Detmer, Frank Bartz, Larry Porter, Travis Breeding, Chuck Callahan, Keasha Haythe, Dave Stepp, Peter Leshner, Dan Rider, Maria D'Arcy, Debi Sewell, Addie Eckardt, Dorchester County Manager Jerry Jones, and Talbot County Manager Clay Stamp.

Guests in attendance were: Salisbury University Dean and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott; ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva and Ryan Mello; 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 Bob Zimberoff; Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis; Ryan Snow (consultant, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism); 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; Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce; Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith; CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's 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; Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) Treasurer Frank Narr; Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Chesapeake College Board of Trustees Chair and Talbot County Economic Development Commission Past Chair Reza Jafari; and Delmarva Community Services President and CEO Andy Hollis. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

In Chairman Chase's absence First Vice-Chairman Ricky Travers called the meeting to order at 10:38 a.m. and introductions were made.

## Action Items

### *Approval of September 12, 2024, Minutes*

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Pfeffer seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

### *Ratification of Executive Board May 21, 2024, Minutes*

Mr. Nelson made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Fuchs seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

### *Ratification of Executive Board August 6, 2024, Minutes*

Mr. Nelson made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Christopher seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. 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 for almost being halfway through this fiscal year. As there were no questions Mr. Travers entertained a motion. Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to accept the report. Delegate Hutchison seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that all payments had been made as listed. Delegate Hutchinson made a motion to accept the RMPIF report. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

#### *Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) Budget*

- Mr. Fuchs stated the only changes have been made to Administration categories of MSRC attorney and Project Consultant. Delegate Hutchinson made a motion to accept the RMEDF budget. Mr. Pfeffer seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated we have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

### *Officer Selection*

Mr. Warner stated at their last meeting held on November 26, 2024, the MSRC Executive Board members discussed and are unanimously recommending the proposed slate for the 2025 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 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair will be Caroline County, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair will be Dorchester County, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair will be Talbot County. Additionally, the General Assembly member will be Delegate Tom Hutchinson.

- 2025 Proposed Executive Board Members
  - Chairman: Walter Chase
  - First Vice-Chairman: Frank Bartz (Caroline)
  - Second Vice-Chairman: Ricky Travers (Dorchester)
  - Third Vice-Chairman: Chuck Callahan (Talbot)
  - Secretary: James Redman
  - Treasurer: Kurt Fuchs
  - General Assembly: Tom Hutchinson
  - Member-at-large: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio
  - Member-at-large: Bill Christopher

Mr. Travers asked if anyone had any other suggestions. Hearing none, Mr. Nelson made a motion to accept the slate as presented. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. Mr. Travers stated that we had a motion and a second. All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Updates / Discussions

##### *Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF)*

Mr. Warner stated that Dr. Sarah Guy (RMEDF project consultant) was unable to attend today, so he will provide the update.

##### Grant extension

- The MSRC extension request was submitted to the Maryland Department of Commerce on August 16, 2024. It was due by August 30.
  - The MSRC requested an extension of the RMEDF grant period until December 31, 2025. The MSRC also requested an extension of the use of administrative funds to support the management of the grant program through the completion of all projects.
- The grant modification (extension) was signed by the Maryland Department of Commerce and MSRC and went into effect on October 10, 2024.
- The MSRC is now working with each county (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) to include the grant modification in the MOU's between the MSRC and each county.
- The projects included in the extension are:

##### Caroline County

- Future Works Workforce Training
- Midshore Optical Broadband Network
- Business Attraction Capacity Building
- Choptank Marina Infrastructure Improvement
- Denton Industrial Park Improvement

### Dorchester County

- Cambridge Harbor Streetscape Design and Partial Construction
- Rails to Trails
- Future Works Workforce Training

### Talbot County

- Future Works Workforce Training
  - Talbot County Agbiotech Manufacturing Project
  - Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe Phase II Planning and Implementation
  - Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan
  - Goldsborough Neck Culvert Improvements
- Additionally, on October 18, 2024, the MSRC initiated another grant extension request regarding the Dorchester County project Incumbent Worker Training.
    - A signed Notice of Approval was received from the Maryland Department of Commerce on November 14, 2024. The MSRC signed and returned it on November 18, 2024.
    - The final step will be for the Maryland Department of Commerce to create another modification to the Grant Agreement. Both Commerce and MSRC will then sign.

### Original grant closing

- The grant between MSRC and Maryland Department of Commerce started November 16, 2022.
  - Grant funds shall be disbursed no later than November 30, 2024.
  - The final report is due December 31, 2024.
- The projects that have been completed on time are:

### Caroline County

- Tech Park Development Plan of Action
- West Denton Infrastructure Study

### Dorchester County

- MidShore Optical Broadband Network Upgrade
- Woods Road Project (the original project completed under budget and now extended to the *Rails to Trails*)
- Chesapeake College CDL/Class B Expansion to Dorchester County
- Edwin Murphy Community Purchase

### Talbot County

- MidShore Optical Broadband Network Upgrade
- ENR (Enhanced Nutrient Removal) Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade (Town of Trappe)
- Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's New Visitor Center
- Building Digital Literacy and Employment Skills at the Talbot County Free Library
- BAAM (Building African American Minds) Workforce Development Program
- Talbot Business Academy (Formerly Inclusive Ventures Program)
- Talbot County Visitors Center Feasibility Study
- The Work Hub

- Automotive Technician Apprenticeship Program

### *Shore Gourmet*

Beth Brewster, Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director, gave the following updates.

Work began with Bay Mushrooms from Clark Canning House Road in Dorchester County outside Federalsburg. The addition of the substrate processing machine has increased production by 50% and is more versatile. This will be able to get other farmers started in growing mushrooms.

A spawning chamber has been added and is important in the mushroom growing process.

‘Mushroom incubation is the process you perform before you inoculate your mushrooms and before your mycelium fully colonizes your substrate. It is a delicate time for most mushrooms, and you can ruin it if you do not have the ideal environmental conditions for the process to succeed.’ Mushroom Growing Chamber

More lab equipment and a commercial kitchen were added to provide value added products like freeze dried powders, mushroom tinctures, and mushroom jerky.

The UMES Small Farms Conference enrolled 50 farmers to tour the facility. The goal was to get more farmers to diversify into mushrooms and controlled environmental agriculture. Bay Mushrooms provided an excellent overview of growing mushrooms and that substrate to start could be purchased from them with the increase in production.

Ms. Brewster also gave a brief update on the Blue Catfish project stating that the product will soon be in local schools and hopefully expand to other markets in the near future.

### Annie’s Project

Shannon Dill, Maryland Cooperative Extension Educator, gave the following updates.

Ms. Dill stated that Annie’s project continues to grow. It not only caters to female farmers but anyone who wants to join. The MSRC supports 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 anyone interested in agriculture.

Ms. Dill thanked the MSRC for their continued support of the project.

### Entrepreneurship Training Program

This training program will serve Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties. The MSRC is partnering with economic development directors of each Mid-Shore county to deliver this program. The facilitator for the program is Will

Holmes Consulting (WHC). WHC is a DBE, SBE, MBE certified firm offering business capital, coaching and operational solutions to emerging companies and management consulting and technology to government agencies, financial institutions, universities, and non-profit organizations.

- DBE = Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program
- SBE = Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Certification
- MBE = Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program

The purpose is to assist small, minority, woman, and veteran entrepreneurs with education, mentorship, and access to capital through an 8-week training program with the goal of helping businesses increase revenue, create jobs, and grow the local and state economies.

#### Measurable objectives

- Each county is to recruit, interview, and select a cohort of 15 established business owners to participate in the program.
- Session topics taught:
  - Building sustainable organizational infrastructure
  - Leading people and planning for growth
  - Marketing and selling B2G, B2B, and B2C
  - Accounting, human resources, legal, taxes and insurance
  - Preparing for capital and essential financial documentationCompanies create a plan for growing their business.

Long-term goals include tracking the following metrics over time:

- Revenue Growth
- Job Growth
- Capital Investment
- Location Expansion

Mid-Shore Entrepreneurship Training Programs are scheduled to operate:

- Talbot (Cohort 3) - Tuesdays – February 4 to March 25
- Caroline - Tuesdays – April 15 to June 3
- Dorchester - Mondays – May 5 to June 23

The county economic development directors Cassandra Vanhooser (Talbot County), Susan Banks (Dorchester County), and Bob Zimberoff (Caroline County) all stated that they look forward to working with William Holmes Consulting and will be keeping us updated after their respective programs are completed.

#### Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner asked everyone to note the upcoming meetings.

2025 tentative MSRC Meeting Dates are in your packets. The dates are:

- Thursday, March 6, 2025 – Talbot County
- Thursday, June 12, 2025 – Caroline County
- Thursday, September 11, 2025 – MSRC Meeting & Tour
- Wednesday, December 10, 2025 – Dorchester County (at Winter MACo)

The next Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be held on January 6, 2024 (Monday) at 12:00pm at the Easton Firehouse.

The "Taste of the Eastern Shore" legislative reception will be held February 13, 2024 (Thursday) at 5:30pm at the Graduate Annapolis.

#### Member comments/requests

Mr. Bartz encouraged each county to support the 2025 Summer Career Enrichment Program by calling the mid-shore public schools' superintendents. He stated that Mr. Warner will be having a meeting with the superintendents this Friday to discuss the schools' financial commitments.

Senator Mautz stated that District Night will be held February 3, 2025, at Market House in Annapolis.

Dr. Scott informed everyone a new Dean of the College of Health and Human Services Matt Laurent was hired at Salisbury University. His first day on the job will be January 8, 2025.

#### Adjourn

On a motion made by Delegate Hutchinson and seconded by Mr. Nelson, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 11:26 a.m.