

The Mid-Shore Regional (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on June 13, 2024, at the Choptank Electric building in Denton, Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Walter Chase, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Lenny Pfeffer, Mike Detmer, Kurt Fuchs, Maria D'Arcy, Chuck Callahan, Caroline County Administrator Kathleen Freeman, Dorchester County Manager Jerry Jones, and Talbot County Manager Clay Stamp.

Guests in attendance were: 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 Robert Zimberoff, Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham, Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Michael Thielke, USDA Rural Development Deputy State Director and Acting Director Letitia Nichols, Comptroller of Maryland Public Engagement Officer – Eastern Shore Mary Handley, Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representatives Mindie Burgoyne and Nancy LaJoice, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Managers Erin Silva and Mary Buffington, Upper Shore Aging Executive Director Andy Hollis, TEDCO Rural Business Innovation Initiative Mentor Bill Bernard, Choptank Electric Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau, People for Change Coalition (PFCC) Executive Director Sandy Pruitt, PFCC Founder/Business Development Jerry McLaurin, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board Assistant Executive Director Ellen LaFrankie, and Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation Legislative Civic Innovation Specialist Meghan Music. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was carrying proxies for Senator Johnny Mautz and Delegate Chris Adams. Mr. Detmer was carrying a proxy for Ricky Travers, Ms. Freeman was carrying proxies for Frank Bartz and Larry Porter, and Mr. Stamp was carrying a proxy for Lynn Mielke.

Mr. Warner took a few minutes to share the news that longtime MSRC member Burton Wilson passed away on May 8, 2024. He spoke about Mr. Wilson's celebration of life held on June 1, 2024, at St. Stephens AME Church in Unionville and highlighted various items from Mr. Wilson's obituary. He further mentioned that Mr. Wilson was the original Talbot Minority Leader on the MSRC. Mr. Warner found in the Council's December 3, 2003, minutes, Mr. Wilson attended a new member orientation in Cambridge along with Jerome Stanley and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio. Mr. Wilson will be greatly missed.

Action Items

Approval of March 7, 2024, Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval for the March 7, 2024, minutes. Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Christopher 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 21, 2023, Minutes

Mr. Christopher made a motion to ratify the minutes. Mr. Pfeffer 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 April 29, 2024, Minutes

Mr. Stamp made a motion to approve 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 saying aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried 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 the fiscal year ending with the exception of fringe due to a small increase in dental.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that the RMPIF budget report has not changed since the MSRC meeting on March 7, 2024.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) Budget

- Mr. Fuchs asked Mr. Warner to explain the changes to the RMEDF budget since the last MSRC meeting.

Mr. Warner stated that there have been three changes.

- The MSRC accountant line reflects the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements, June 30, 2023, that was performed by the accountant. This is a report that the MSRC requested and planned for since the beginning of the MSRC's administration of the RMEDF. The MSRC Executive Board and Mr. Warner liked the one-page summary of the MSRC funds moving through the Council.
- The Project Consultant line reflects the administrative fees paid to the project consultant to date.
- Dorchester – allocated administration to a project line reflects the additional \$60,000 that has been issued to the County. Dorchester County is not using it for administration; they are using it for project fees for the Woods Road project modification Rails to Trails project from Washington Street to Woods Road. The

Rails to Trails Project from Washington Street to Woods Road in Cambridge will provide a safer way for employees to get to companies located on Woods Road rather than walking or riding a bike on Route 50 to Woods Road.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve all three reports. 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.

Approval of FY25 Scope of Work

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 29 and May 21, 2024, the board reviewed and discussed the scope of work. During the May 21 meeting they approved for the full Council's consideration the FY25 Scope of Work. He noted there are no changes to the Scope of Work. It remains the same as FY25.

Mr. Fuchs made a motion to approve the FY25 Scope of Work. Mr. Pfeffer 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 FY25 Budget

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 29 and May 21, 2024, the board reviewed and discussed the budget. During the May 21 meeting they approved the full Council's consideration the MSRC's FY25 operating budget. Mr. Warner stated the only changes from the current budget (FY24) to the proposed budget (FY25) are to personal expenses as the Board graciously gave staff a pay increase which in turn affected taxes and fringe.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve the FY25 budget. Mr. Pfeffer 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 FY25. 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 FY2025 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF). This document was included in the meeting packet. Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 29 and May 21, 2024, the board reviewed and discussed the RMPIF projects and investments. During the May 21 meeting they approved for the full Council's consideration the MSRC's FY25 RMPIF budget.

The RMPF grant application is to be submitted to the Rural Maryland Council by August 1, 2024. Regional Planning and Development Councils have a rolling application process from 4/15/24 to 8/1/24.

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

1) MSRC Capacity Building Coordinator - \$31,200

Provide additional capacity for MSRC in development, delivery, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and activities. The Capacity Building Coordinator will serve as a liaison between program directors and other stakeholders to support program reporting to MSRC, the board of directors, and other stakeholders.

2) Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) - \$80,000

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, entrepreneur, and innovation ecosystem (that includes farmers and value-add producers) and the expansion of programs and projects such as the F³ Tech Accelerator Program and Agbiotech Manufacturing, the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, a Food Safety Training Program, and a developing Produce Processing and Aggregation Facility.

3) Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center - \$80,000

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 16, 2024, 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.

4) Delmarva Index - \$11,250

Continue working with the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (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). Phase VII will add additional value to the Index through continued maintenance and updates to Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA Tools, Workforce Infographics, Economic Snapshots, Economic Dashboard, Healthcare Facilities Map, State Parks Dashboard, and Public Safety Dashboard.

5) Circuit Rider - \$30,000

This is to continue the GIS assistance to counties and municipalities. The funding amount is the same as FY24.

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.

6) Agricultural Census Dashboard - \$13,500

This is a partnership with the TCCLES.

This proposed application will explore agricultural data and the economics of agriculture on Maryland's Eastern Shore and will highlight some of the potential opportunities and threats to this industry. This publicly accessible application will visualize data from the USDA Agricultural Census with emphasis on change overtime from 2012, 2017 and 2022. A variety of Agricultural Census statistics will be included to provide users an understanding of farms, producers, and the economics of agriculture on the Eastern Shore. This application builds off another popular Delmarva Index resource, the Agricultural Census Infographics which were developed in Fiscal Year 2020. The new application will expand upon these static infographics to include additional statistics and data points and will incorporate interactive elements, allowing the user to filter and explore the data in a more engaging way. Data will be visualized through a series of charts, maps, and indicators.

7) Delmarva Index Website Upgrades - \$7,500

This is a partnership with the TCCLES.

New resources and data continue to be added to the Delmarva Index each year however, the site itself has not undergone major updates since its initial launch in 2019. This potential website upgrade will allow the ESRGC to reevaluate the Delmarva Index website and implement many important enhancements based on user input and committee feedback. The ESRGC will utilize modern standards in design and development to upgrade the front-end design and backend functionality. The ESRGC will also lean heavily on feedback received from users and committee members to upgrade the website including improvements to the overall design to invoke a data-centric website, streamlined access to data, addition of logical categories, links directly to products, and more.

8) 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.

9) Summer Career Enrichment Program - \$197,550

The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) is a 4-week program aimed at providing middle school students with hands-on activities and training in

Cyber, Media Arts, Chess, Presentation and Video Design, App Development, Drones, Animation, and Robotics that lead to students becoming college and career ready. The program is in partnership with the Mid-Shore Regional Council, PFC Coalition, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center, and Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline County school systems, and targets rising 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. The program provides an opportunity for students to learn skills in requirements gathering, working on teams, delivering presentations, interviewing techniques, time management, project management, leadership development, and problem solving. The instructors also incorporate strategies to teach students on how to become an entrepreneur and the requisite skills needed to start a business. In addition, students are exposed to career professionals and entrepreneurs, and gain unique experience to boost their confidence level, critical thinking, and interaction with peers.

10) Entrepreneurship Training Program - \$75,000

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.

One cohort per county (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) will be supported.

11) 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. Warner stated that the MSRC's investment in SCEP could be lowered since sponsorships for the program are still being secured. If the SCEP funding can be lowered, it is his recommendation to move the additional funds to ESEC. The MSRC Executive Board discussed this during their May 21, 2024, meeting and agreed. If this situation should arise the movement of funds should be authorized by a vote of the MSRC Executive Board.

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to approve the RMPF FY25 budget as presented, giving the MSRC Executive Board authority to move funds as explained if needed. Mr. Fuchs 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.

Special presentation

Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation

Mr. Warner introduced Meghan Music, Legislative Civic Innovation Specialist from the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation (MDSCI), to share information on the Maryland Corps/Service Year Option Program. She stated that this program is open to high school graduates (18 and older). Participants receive full-time service opportunities with host site partners that provide critical job skills and meet critical employer needs. They earn at least

\$15/hour for nine months of full-time service and have access to accredited apprenticeships, mentoring, and professional development. Participants receive access to wrap-around services: healthcare, money management, childcare, reasonable accommodation, and more. Upon completion they receive \$6,000 that can be spent anyway they see fit. Focus areas for host site partners are climate, conservation, education, historic trades, public health, information technology, and public safety. They are required to provide fringe, onsite mentor, meaningful work opportunities, and financial contribution (large organizations only). MDSCI is interviewing companies all the time; the criteria is stringent.

Updates

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF)

Mr. Warner stated Heather Gramm, Assistant Secretary, Business & Industry Sector Development, Maryland Department of Commerce, sent an email to the regional councils on May 28, 2024, stating a few of the regional council executive directors have communicated with Maryland Department of Commerce (MD Commerce) regarding projects for which an extension beyond the November 2024 grant close-out date will be needed. MD Commerce completely understands and is willing to work with the councils and the applicants. MD Commerce would like each regional council to consolidate all grant extension requests into a single request submitted by August 30, 2024. This will enable MD Commerce to review the requests and execute a single grant modification that is inclusive of all approved project extensions.

Mr. Warner added that he and Dr. Sarah Guy (RMEDF project consultant) have been in communication with the counties (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) economic development directors regarding this process and they will work through it together.

Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC)

ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva provided progress reports on two projects: Agricultural Reporting Application and MUST Bus Website Redesign and Redevelopment.

The Agricultural Reporting Application presentation aided by PowerPoint depicted a new way to help farmers track multiple crops to help aid them in the preparation of their Annual Implementation Reports (AIR). This project was the result of a request from Extension Educator, Agriculture & Natural Resources for the Maryland Cooperative Extension, Shannon Dill. Ms. Dill helps her brother-in-law with his farm and knows firsthand how difficult it is to track the details of multiple crops in order to collect necessary reporting figures for the Annual Implementation Reports (AIR). Ms. Silva and her team created an application that was able to electronically assist. They first gather data for a farm, including how many fields are planted, what crops are being planted, the nutrients applied, and harvest information from elevator tickets. Users can then view the information in the same format as the final table in the AIR form. Additionally, users can sort by farm, fertilizer, field, etc. The MSRC group was extremely impressed with this presentation and asked Ms. Silva if she would be able to share it with other organizations. Ms. Silva stated that it was not yet

sufficiently tested but would very much like to be able to share this with organizations and farmers after further testing. Ms. Dill was unable to attend the meeting tonight but sent a message stating that her University of Maryland Extension team met with the ESRGC and they are very impressed with the progress of the reporting tool. They have integrated many of the recording and reporting requirements that farms must do, and they are excited to be piloting it this summer. The MSRC looks forward to hearing more about this tool in future meetings.

Next, Ms. Silva shared the new MUST (Maryland Upper Shore Transit) website. She stated that the site is almost complete. The new site is smart phone friendly and interactive. She and her team have been working with members of Delmarva Community Transit (DCT), Queen Anne's County County Ride (QACCR), MSRC, and the MUST Committee. The website will give DCT and QACCR the ability to update the website for any bus problems, cancelled routes, holiday closures, etc. This will be able to be done in real time. At present, changes to bus routes are being finalized. The website should be able to go live in the near future.

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner provided the following update of the SCEP. He said the principal players in the operation of this program are People for Change Coalition's Sandy Pruitt and Jerry McLaurin. Both of whom are present tonight. Mr. Warner shared a PowerPoint highlighting the following information regarding this year's SCEP.

- 330 seats is full capacity (9 sessions)
 - 383 seats are filled
- 239 students are registered to attend
 - Caroline County = 104
 - Dorchester County = 80
 - Talbot County = 55
 - 144 are attending both sessions
 - 52 are just attending session 1
 - 43 are just attending session 2
- Programs being offered in 2024
 - App Development for Youth
 - Animation for Youth
 - Cyber Security for Youth
 - Drone Technology for Youth
 - Introduction To Careers in Healthcare (ITCH) program
 - Making the Right Moves Chess Immersion
 - Media Arts and Video Editing
 - Presentation and Video Design
 - Robotics for Youth
- Sponsors
 - Mid-Shore Regional Council (Rural MD Prosperity Investment Fund)
 - Caroline Human Services Council
 - M&T Bank
 - Truist
 - Mid-Shore Community Foundation (George B. Todd Fund)
 - Choptank Electric Trust

- Shore United Bank
- Tom & Marge Wolf Education Foundation
- Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Easton Utilities
- PepUp (A Tri Gas Family Company)
- U.S. Wind
- Program location
 - Colonel Richardson High School, 25320 Richardson Road, Federalsburg
- Two Sessions offered: Monday through Thursday from 9:00am – 1:00pm
 - Session 1: July 8 – 11 and July 15 – 18
 - Session 2: July 22 – 25 and July 29 – August 1

Mr. Warner urged everyone to visit the SCEP this year. Multiple options will be established to tour the SCEP. Emails from the MSRC office will be sent to notify you of the dates. Please sign up to see firsthand how much impact these classes make on the students participating.

Ms. Pruitt and Mr. McLaurin thanked the MSRC for investing in the students. They reiterated how important this program is to the participants and how impressive these young people are.

Announcements/comments

There were no comments or requests.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.