

The Mid-Shore Regional Council held a scheduled meeting on September 12, 2024, in conjunction with their annual field trip. This year the council went to establishments in Dorchester County including the Dorchester County Visitor Center and the site of the Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) in Cambridge, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park in Church Creek, Patriot Point in Madison, and Woods Road in Cambridge. We would like to thank Susan Banks for helping to arrange those visits.

MSRC members and guests met at the Council's office at 8:00 a.m. to board the bus and head to our first meeting spot, the Dorchester County Visitor Center. Additional Council members and individuals who drove separately due to their work schedules and other commitments met us there. A second bus met the group at the visitor center to assist with transportation. A big thank you to Delmarva Community Transit (DCT) for providing the buses and bus drivers Greg Wilson and James Watkins.

MSRC members in attendance included: Walter Chase, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Joyce Harrod, Steve Rideout (first stop and lunch meeting), Travis Breeding (lunch meeting and Patriot Point), Pete Leshner, and Dorchester County Manager Jerry Jones (first stop and lunch meeting).

Guests in attendance were: Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks; Caroline County Economic Development and Tourism Director Bob Zimberoff; Rural Maryland Council Office Secretary Leeza DeCheubel; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham; CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly Carels; SG Insights, llc principal Sarah Guy; Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce; Delmarva Community Services President and CEO Andy Hollis; Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder; Dorchester County Department of Tourism Director Holly Gilpin; Congressman Andy Harris' Operations & District Outreach Director Keith Graffius; Comptroller of Maryland Public Engagement Officer – Eastern Shore Mary Handley; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan; Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Manager Mary Buffington; St. Michaels resident Lawrence Harrod; Choptank Electric Manager Member Services Anne Chouinard; People for Change Coalition (PFCC) representatives Sandy Pruitt (Executive Director) and Jerry McLaurin (Founder/Business Development); Maryland Department of Labor representatives Terenda Thomas (Reemployment Program Director – Upper Shore) and Darrin Pruitt (Regional Local Veteran Employment Representative); Maryland Cooperative Extension Educator Shannon Dill; Town of Federalsburg Councilmember Debi Sewell; and Dorchester County Economic Development Office Business Development Manager Nicole Evans. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

The first stop was in Cambridge.

Dorchester County Visitor Center – 2 Rose Hill Place, Cambridge, Maryland 21613
<https://visitdorchester.org/>

We were welcomed by Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks. Ms. Banks welcomed us all and introduced Dorchester County Tourism Director Holly Gilpin, who gave us a brief history lesson on the new Visitors Center. She invited us all to wander around and see the many displays rich in Dorchester history.



Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI)

<https://cambridgeharbor.org/>

While in the Visitors Center, the group was introduced to Frank Narr, Treasurer of CWDI. Mr. Narr introduced CWDI board members Angie Henst (President) and Shay Lewis-Sisco (Vice President) and the projects lead engineer Ken Usab (Principal, Morris and Ritchie Associates). Mr. Narr stated that he has been a part of the project for over 30 years and proceeded to share the Cambridge Harbor Streetscape Design and partial construction as well as future ideas for buildouts for the remaining lots. He then took us on a walk around the area where the former Cambridge Hospital was previously located and continued to share ideas for future developments to the site.

CWDI, a Mid-Shore CEDS project, has received EDA funds as well as Rural Maryland Economic Development Funds.



After the tour in Cambridge, we boarded the buses and drove to our next stop in Church Creek.

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park – 4068 Golden Hill Road, Church Creek, MD 21622.

<https://www.nps.gov/hatu/index.htm>

We were greeted by Maryland State Park Ranger Mary Dennard. Ms. Dennard was full of happy exuberance as she welcomed us and gave us background on the building and the life of Harriet Tubman. We viewed a short film highlighting Ms. Tubman's life and her accomplishments. We were also provided time to explore the many items on display explaining the incredible life and experiences of Ms. Tubman. As you make your way around the exhibits realize the depth of her accomplishments. It was a true honor and humbling experience to have her life explained so well and understand how she shaped history.



The next stop was Boats & Hose restaurant – 514 Taylors Island Road, Taylors Island, MD 21669.

The MSRC meeting was held prior to lunch. Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 12:29 p.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was in possession of proxies from Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Chris Adams, and Delegate Tom Hutchison. Mr. Leshner was carrying a proxy from Chuck Callahan. Mr. Jones was carrying proxies from Ricky Travers and Lenny Pfeffer. Mr. Breeding was carrying a proxy from Frank Bartz. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Kurt Fuchs and James Redman.

Action Items

Approval June 13, 2024, Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval of the June 13, 2024, minutes. Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Rideout 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, Mr. Warner presented three reports.

MSRC Operating Budget

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

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Mr. Warner stated that this chart shows all of the projects previously approved by the Council to be funded when RMPIF funds are released.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Budget

- Mr. Warner stated that this report has not changed since last reporting with the exception of payments to the project consultant. Mr. Warner also reminded everyone that Dorchester County elected to place their additional administrative funds into one of their projects which is allowable under the grant.

Mr. Christopher made a motion to accept all three reports as presented. 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.

Updates

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner stated that this year's program has been completed. It was a tremendous success.

Caroline County was the host county this year. The program was held at Colonel Richardson High School.

The SCEP was conducted Monday through Thursday from 9:00am to 1:00pm, Session 1 (July 8–11 and July 15–18) and Session 2 (July 22–25 and July 29–August 1).

There were 9 tracks offered: Cyber Security, Media Arts, Chess Immersion, Presentation/Video Design, Animation, App Development, Robotics, and Drone Technology. Also offered in conjunction with SCEP was the Introduction to Careers in Healthcare (ITCH). ITCH is a program created by Dr. Judi Gieske.

This year's SCEP targeted rising 6th through 9th graders.

Mr. Warner asked Ms. Pruitt and Mr. McLaurin, the SCEP administrators, to comment. They spoke passionately about the SCEP and how grateful they are for the partnership with the MSRC in bringing this dynamic program to the youth of the mid-shore region. They expressed how committed their instructors are to the SCEP and how many of them have already expressed interest in participating in next year's classes.

Additionally, Mr. Warner, Ms. Pruitt, and Mr. McLaurin spoke about some of the challenges this year: transportation difficulties and classes not being filled to capacity. They look forward to discussing these issues with the three counties' superintendents

during an upcoming meeting. This meeting is held every fall to review the recent SCEP and plan for the upcoming SCEP.

Mr. McLaurin informed everyone that he is waiting for this year's promotional video to be completed. It will highlight all three of the public schools' superintendents, who were able to attend one of the seven tours offered this year.

Mr. Warner encouraged anyone who has not attended a SCEP tour to please do so next year. He thanked everyone for supporting SCEP.

On July 31, a luncheon meeting was held for the SCEP instructors, teacher assistants, and public schools' administrators. MSRC representatives Walter Chase, Kurt Fuchs, Carolyn Spicher, Terry Deighan, and Scott Warner as well as People for Change Coalition representatives Sandy Pruitt and Jerry McLaurin thanked everyone for their work and dedication to bring this wonderful program to the students of the mid-shore region.

Mr. Warner thanked all the funders for supporting this year's SCEP. First, was the MSRC who utilized Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund monies to contribute a large portion to the budget. The MSRC made the SCEP its largest funding priority this year. Mr. Warner also thanked the county school systems (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) for their financial commitments to the program: teachers/administrators and bus transportation. He thanked Caroline County for the use of the building. Additionally, he thanked the community sponsors for supporting the SCEP with generous financial contributions. These sponsors were:

- Caroline Human Services Council
- The M&T Charitable Foundation
- PNC Bank
- Truist
- Mid-Shore Community Foundation – George Todd Fund
- Choptank Electric Trust
- Horizon Farm Credit
- Shore United Bank
- Tom & Marge Wolf Education Fund
- Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Easton Utilities
- Pep Up (A Tri Gas Family Company)
- U.S. Wind

Finally, Mr. Warner thanked Sandy Pruitt and Jerry McLaurin for their partnership and commitment to offering such a fantastic program.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund

Mr. Warner provided the following update.

As was reported at the June MSRC meeting, Maryland Department of Commerce contacted the regional councils regarding extending the grant beyond the November 2024 grant close-out date.

The MSRC extension request was submitted to the Maryland Department of Commerce on August 16, 2024. It was due by August 30.

The MSRC is requesting an extension of the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund grant period until December 31, 2025. It is anticipated that all projects will be complete by this date. The grant request includes a list of each project and its estimated completion date. Mr. Warner thanked the Mid-shore counties' economic development directors for assisting Dr. Sarah Guy and the MSRC on preparing this extension request.

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 projects included in the extension request 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

StoryMap on the invasive Blue Catfish

Mr. Warner and ESRGC Project Manager Mary Buffington provided an update.

Ryan Mello (ESRGC GIS Project Manager) sent an email a couple of weeks ago regarding this StoryMap. He thanked many people for their help in the creation of the StoryMap on the invasive Blue Catfish. He appreciated being included in the Mid-Shore field trip last year that sparked this idea. He further stated the ESRGC has lots of ideas on future updates for this StoryMap.

Invasive Blue Catfish: From Problem to Plate, shows the spread and impact of the invasive blue catfish in our local waterways. Blue Catfish is a non-native species causing serious disruptions to our waterways, outcompeting native species, and altering the delicate balance of our aquatic environments. This StoryMap illustrates the threats to native species and the ecosystem, while also highlighting how seafood processors are helping to restore balance in our waters. Seafood processors are stepping up by turning this challenge into an opportunity, harvesting these catfish to protect our waters and provide a sustainable seafood option. Learn what you can do to support these efforts—from participating in local removal initiatives, choosing sustainable seafood, and spreading the word by exploring our StoryMap, *Invasive Blue Catfish: From Problem to Plate*.

You can view the story here, [Invasive Blue Catfish: From Problem to Plate](#).

UM Shore Regional Health

Mr. Warner provided the following update.

The MSRC Executive Board discussed the new proposed medical facility in Easton during their April 29, 2024, and May 21, 2024, meetings. The Executive Board determined that they would like to schedule a meeting with the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) to discuss the UMSRH project. Senator Johnny Mautz and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio were instrumental in establishing the meeting.

The meeting was held on August 6, 2024, at the MSRC office.

MSRC attendees were:

- MSRC
 - Walter Chase – Chairman
 - Ricky Travers – First Vice-Chairman (Dorchester County Council)
 - Chuck Callahan – Second Vice-Chairman (Talbot County Council President)
 - James Redman – Secretary (Private sector/private citizen)
 - Kurt Fuchs – Treasurer (Maryland Farm Bureau representative)
 - Johnny Mautz – Maryland State Senator (General Assembly representative)
 - Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio – At-large member (Private business representative)
 - Bill Christopher – At-large member (Private business representative)
 - Scott Warner – Executive Director
- University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS)
 - Dr. Mohan Suntha (President and CEO, UMMS)
 - Kristin Jones Bryce (Senior Vice President and Chief External Affairs Officer)
 - Kara Bowman Borcz (Chief of Staff)
 - Ken Kozel (President and CEO, Shore Regional Health System)

Items discussed during the meeting were:

- Concerns at Cambridge Freestanding Medical Facility
- Shore Regional Medical Center timeline
- Emergency Room wait times at Easton hospital
- Residency program and professional development
- Mobile Integrated Community Health

The hospital representatives offered to meet quarterly with the MSRC Executive Board to keep the MSRC updated on the progress of the health system. Mr. Warner is working with Ken Kozel to establish the meetings.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner reminded everyone of the upcoming meetings.

- Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting
 - October 16, 2024 (Wednesday) at 12:00pm at the Easton Firehouse
- Mid-Shore Regional Council meeting
 - December 11, 2024 (Wednesday) at Hyatt, Cambridge in conjunction with the Eastern Shore Regional Councils Joint Luncheon Meeting

Announcements/comments

There were no comments.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

After lunch, the tour continued to Patriot Point.

Patriot Point - 750 Taylors Island Road, Madison, MD 21648

<https://patriotpoint.org/>

Property managers Will and Stephanie Moon greeted us. They gave us a brief background of Patriot Point then let us all wander the property. Patriot Point is a Military Bowl Foundation's 294-acre retreat that provides a safe, secure, and tranquil outdoor recreational retreat facility for wounded, ill, and injured active-duty service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers who face daily struggles related to their time spent defending our great nation. We wandered into the welcome center, the expansive gym, and finally the main house. The grounds are beautiful and the stories that Will and Stephanie shared about how this place helps so many made us all want to help get their story out so they can continue their work. This is a place you genuinely want to visit again.



Great Room



We left Patriot Point for our final project site visit of the day, Woods Road.

Woods Road Project

This Mid-Shore CEDS project received Rural Maryland Economic Development Funds.

Our final visit of the day was to drive down Woods Road to see the improvements and upgrades (culvert replacement and drainage), repaving, and striping from the circle on Route 16 to Route 50. The railroad that served Woods Road's businesses was permanently shut down in May 2016 causing increased truck traffic. The improvements were a necessity to support the truck traffic and growing businesses that utilize the road. There are currently over 600 jobs on Woods Road plus over 200 jobs on adjacent roads. Additionally, the improvements allow increased ambulatory and emergency traffic to and from the new University of Maryland Shore Regional Health at Cambridge facility.

Additionally, the project was expanded to include a Rails to Trails project that will connect Washington Street to Woods Road. The trail will provide a safer way for employees without motor vehicle transportation to get to businesses on Woods Road by avoiding Route 50.

The consensus once again was it was a highly informative, enjoyable day visiting sites in Dorchester County and being able to see the positive impact the Rural Maryland Economic Development Funds have had on so many worthwhile projects in Dorchester.

One bus took its passengers to the Dorchester County Visitor Center. The other bus arrived back at the Mid-Shore Regional Council office at 4:00 p.m.