

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on December 10, 2025. It was held at the Hyatt in Cambridge, Maryland prior to the joint luncheon.

MSRC members in attendance included: Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Kurt Fuchs, Frank Bartz, Larry Porter, Travis Breeding, Ricky Travers, Lenny Pfeffer, Mike Detmer (also Congressman Andy Harris' Community Liaison), Keasha Haythe, Dave Stepp, Peter Leshner, Maria D'Arcy, Debi Sewell, Caroline County Administrator Kathleen Freeman, Dorchester County Manager Jerry Jones, Lajan Cephas, and Walter Chase.

Guests in attendance were: Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Project Manager Erin Silva, University of Maryland Extension Educator Shannon Dill, Caroline County Economic Development and Tourism Director Bob Zimmeroff, Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism consultant Ryan Snow, Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis, MARBIDCO Executive Director Steve McHenry, Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith, CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly Carels, Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp and Impact Analyst Megan Speake, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Alyssa Hastings, U.S. Senator Angela Alsobrooks' Eastern Shore Regional Director Kim Kratovil, Comptroller of Maryland Public Engagement Officer – Eastern Shore Mary Handley, Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Regional Development Senior Director Tamar Osterman, Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representatives Mindie Burgoyne and Brigitte Peters, Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder, Chesapeake College Board of Trustees Chair and Talbot County Economic Development Commission Past Chair Reza Jafari, BEACON Director John Hickman, University of Maryland Shore Regional Health External Affairs & Community Liaison Director Lara Wilson, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center Executive Director Mike Thielke, Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce, Advantis principal Sarah Guy, National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Program Manager Joe D'Antonio, and National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Matthew Leder. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was carrying a proxy for Delegate Chris Adams. Mr. Detmer was carrying a proxy for Lenny Pfeffer (until Mr. Pfeffer was able to attend half-way through the meeting), Mr. Stepp was carrying a proxy for Chuck Callahan, and Keasha Haythe was carrying a proxy for Lynn Mielke.

## Action Items

*Approval of September 11, 2025, Minutes*

*Ratification of Executive Board May 27, 2025, Minutes*

*Ratification of Executive Board September 15, 2025, Minutes*

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve all three sets of 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 report.

#### MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that all expenses are on track for this time of year. He noted with regards to income that the first payment from EDA was made and the MSRC is still waiting for the grant from MTA. Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions. Mr. Travers made a motion to approve the report as presented. Ms. Cephas 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.

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

- Mr. Fuchs stated funds have been distributed as listed. He noted that the MSRC Capacity Building Coordinator line-item funding is disbursed monthly. Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions. Mr. Travers made a motion to approve the report as presented. Ms. Cephas 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.

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

- Mr. Fuchs stated the only change since the last meeting has been to the Project Consultant category which is billed monthly. Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions. Mr. Travers made a motion to approve the report 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.

### *Officer Selection*

Mr. Warner stated at their last meeting held on November 24, 2025, the MSRC Executive Board members discussed and are unanimously recommending the proposed slate for the 2026 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 Talbot County,

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair will be Caroline County, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair will be Dorchester County. Additionally, the General Assembly member Delegate Chris Adams.

- 2026 Proposed Executive Board Members
  - Chairman: Walter Chase
  - First Vice-Chairman: Chuck Callahan (Talbot)
  - Second Vice-Chairman: Frank Bartz (Caroline)
  - Third Vice-Chairman: Ricky Travers (Dorchester)
  - Secretary: James Redman
  - Treasurer: Kurt Fuchs
  - General Assembly: Chris Adams
  - Member-at-large: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio
  - Member-at-large: Bill Christopher

Chairman Chase asked if anyone had any other suggestions.

Mr. Stepp made a motion to accept the slate as presented. Mr. Detmer 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 began the update by showing the recently completed promotional video of the 2025 SCEP.

He then stated the MSRC conducted its annual in-person meeting with the mid-shore superintendents. The meeting was held on November 5, 2025, at the MSRC office. The attendees were:

- MSRC
  - Walter Chase
  - Scott Warner
- People for Change Coalition
  - Sandy Pruitt
  - Jerry McLaurin
- Superintendents
  - Derek Simmons, Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools
  - Jymil Thompson, Superintendent, Dorchester County Public Schools
  - Sharon Pepukayi, Superintendent, Talbot County Public Schools

All three superintendents agreed to be part of the SCEP in 2026. It will be held in Dorchester County at DCTC (Dorchester Career and Technology Center).

It will still target the same students: rising 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Everyone agreed to focus the program on quality not quantity. The goal is to educate 330 students. The same as last year.

Sponsorship letters for 2026 SCEP were sent November 12, 2025, via email.

A follow-up email will be sent in the near future with a link to the 2025 video.

## *Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund*

Sarah Guy, Principal, Advantis and Scott Warner, MSRC Executive Director provided the following updates.

- The grant administration is going well.
- Current grant extension was for the termination date to be December 31, 2025, with all grant objectives and required work and deliverables to be completed and delivered by January 31, 2026.
- Dr. Guy is communicating with Maryland Department of Commerce (Roger Venezia) to extend the termination date for three projects to May 31, 2026, with final reports due June 30, 2026. One project in each county.
  - Caroline County - Choptank Marina Infrastructure Project
  - Dorchester County - Rails to Trails
  - Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan
- On December 5, 2025, Maryland Department of Commerce sent a Letter of Approval for the proposed modification to the grant agreement between Commerce and MSRC for the Rural Economic Development Fund.

### *Entrepreneurship Training Program*

- *Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties*

Mr. Warner stated this has been another wonderful partnership between the MSRC and the three mid-shore counties.

The program is funded by the MSRC via the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund administered by the Rural Maryland Council (RMC). Thank you...

- Charlotte Davis and the team at the RMC
- Executive Committee and Executive Board of the RMC
- MAERDAF review board
- Mid-Shore counties – Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot

The 8-week training program is conducted by Will Holmes of Will Holmes Consulting (WHC). Mr. Warner thanked Keasha Haythe for all her support and work with Mr. Holmes since he conceived this program several years ago.

The county economic development directors gave updates:

- Cassandra Vanhooser (Talbot County), who will be hosting the county's 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of businesses, spoke highly of the program and provided examples of successful outcomes from the program.
- Susan Banks (Dorchester County), who will be hosting the county's 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort of businesses, said the 1<sup>st</sup> year was a learning experience for her and her staff. She is ready and looking forward to another successful program.
- Bob Zimberoff (Caroline County), who will be hosting the county's 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort of businesses, stated that he saw many eureka moments throughout the cohort and looks forward to assisting more businesses with the momentous help of Will Holmes.

Ms. Burgoyne added that the Implementing AI into Your Business online training that Will Holmes conducted this past October was very well done. She would recommend any business take part in such training in the future. (This free, two-session artificial intelligence training series led by Will Holmes Consulting and Talbot County was held in partnership with Caroline County, Dorchester County, Worcester County, and MSRC.)

Mid-Shore Entrepreneurship Training Programs scheduled for 2026:

- Talbot: Tuesdays – January 27 to March 17
- Dorchester: Mondays – February 9 to March 30
- Caroline: Tuesdays – April 21 to June 9

### Presentation

*Mini-documentary (NADO-NARC video project – case study on MSRC)  
EDDs In Action: Mid-Shore Regional Council*

Mr. Warner provided a brief background on this NADO-NARC project.

- NADO = National Association of Development Organizations
- NARC = National Association of Regional Councils

He was contacted just prior to the MSRC's June 2025 Council meeting. Joe D'Antonion (NADO Program Manager) and Matthew Leder (NARC Program Manager) wanted to do a case study on the MSRC.

Filming was conducted on July 8 and July 9. Filming took place in all 3 mid-shore counties.

- 28 people were interviewed
  - 14 MSRC members
    - 3 state elected representatives
    - 3 county elected representatives (one from each county)
    - 3 county managers/administrators
    - 2 private business representatives
    - 1 Maryland Farm Bureau representative
    - 2 Private sector/private citizens
  - 2 ESEC loan clients
  - 2 ESRGC team members
  - 2 ESEC team members
  - 1 TCCLES executive director
  - 4 SCEP staff
  - 2 economic development directors
  - 1 MSRC executive director
- 8 hours of film

Mr. Warner introduced Mr. D'Antonio and Mr. Leder thanking them for producing the film and investing their time and talents.

Mr. Leder provided a brief introduction of the EDA funded project Economic Development District Community of Practice (EDD CoP). He also thanked and listed everyone that agreed to be filmed. He was sorry that not everyone made the final version of the documentary. Mr. Leder was moved by the people he met throughout the mid-shore region.

The film *EDDs in Action: Mid-Shore Regional Council*, [EDDs in Action](#), was shown. Originally planned for 7 to 8 minutes, the actual documentary is 11 minutes in length.

The film was very well received by the group.

Mr. D'Antonio concluded the presentation by thanking the MSRC and explaining how the video will be distributed and utilized.

#### *MSRC Impact Analysis – FY25*

Mr. Warner introduced Dr. Guy and stated that she had just completed the MSRC Impact Analysis for FY25.

Similar to last year (FY24), Dr. Guy presented both the MSRC's Return on Investment and Investments in Projects Supported by the Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). She explained the two-page (front and back) infographic distributed in everyone's meeting packet discussing the methodology and inputs used to produce the document.

Mr. Jafari, a member of Maryland's Economic Council (MEC) by Governor's appointment, stated that the MSRC should make a presentation to the MEC utilizing the mini-documentary and the MSRC Impact Analysis.

#### Upcoming Events

Mr. Warner asked everyone to note the upcoming meetings.

2026 tentative MSRC Meeting Dates are in your packets. The dates are:

- Thursday, March 5, 2026 – Talbot County
- Thursday, June 11, 2026 – Caroline County
- Thursday, September 10, 2026 – MSRC Meeting & Tour
- Thursday, December 10, 2026 – Dorchester County

The next Mid-Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) meeting will be January 7, 2026 (Wednesday) at 12:00pm at the Easton Firehouse.

The "Taste of the Eastern Shore" legislative reception will be on February 12, 2025 (Thursday) at 5:30pm at the Graduate Annapolis.

#### Member comments/requests

There were no comments or requests.

#### Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m. by unanimous consent.