

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on March 6, 2025. It was held at the Easton Firehouse, Easton Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Carolyn Spicher, Kurt Fuchs, Mike Detmer, Frank Bartz, Dan Rider, Maria D'Arcy, Lynn Mielke, Walter Chase, 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 Managers Erin Silva and Mary Buffington; 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 Program Administrator Megan D'Arcy; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism consultant Ryan Snow; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) Interim Executive Director Dan McDermott; Choptank Electric Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau; Governor Wes Moore's Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison Madison Bryce; Chesapeake College Vice President for Workforce and Academic Programs Dave Harper; CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield External Affairs Manager Melissa Kelly Carels; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Alyssa Hastings; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Nancy LaJoyce; Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Tri-County Council of the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Executive Director Greg Padgham, Dorchester County Department of Tourism Director Holly Gilpin; BEACON Director John Hickman, Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Michael Thielke; Advantis principal Sarah Guy; Delmarva Community Services President and CEO Andy Hollis; and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Rail and Intermodal Freight – Rail Program & Policy Manager Thomas Mackay. MSRC staff present were Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Mr. Warner announced that we are celebrating Chairman Chase's birthday at which time everyone sang Happy Birthday. Chairman Chase rose and thanked everyone and stated that on March 28 he will be turning 90 years old.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 5:26 p.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was in possession of proxies from Senator Johnny Mautz, Delegate Chris Adams, and Delegate Tom Hutchinson. Mike Detmer was carrying a proxy for Lenny Pfeffer, Jerry Jones was carrying a proxy for Ricky Travers, and Clay Stamp was carrying a proxy for Chuck Callahan. Mr. Warner was in possession of an electronic votes from Dan Franklin, James Redman, Bill Christopher, and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio.

Action Items

Approval of December 11, 2024, Minutes

Mr. Stamp made a motion to approve the December 11, 2024, minutes. Mr. Fuchs seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that 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 approved unanimously.

Ratification of revised CEDS document

Mr. Warner stated that all MSRC voting members and County Administrator/ Mangers are part of the CEDS Committee.

The CEDS Committee met on October 16, 2024. At the meeting they reviewed the intent of the CEDS process (ensure eligibility for EDA funds and serve as regional forum) and MSRC's purpose in the process (MSRC is the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development District and as such facilitates and constructs the Mid-Shore CEDS). They were reminded that the 1st CEDS document was submitted to EDA on October 16, 2002. They were also informed of the following:

- 38 projects are currently part of the Action Plan
- GPRA Data Collection period FY24 (7/1/23 to 6/30/24)
 - 25 projects reported funding, jobs, and/or investment activity
 - \$16,314,507 funding total
 - \$1,688,904 EDA
 - \$354,973 USDA
 - \$2,752,191 Other Federal
 - \$8,627,495 State
 - \$2,890,944 Local
 - 224.50 estimated number of jobs created or retained
 - \$6,755,359 estimated amount of private sector investment generated

During the meeting, the committee reviewed and revised the CEDS Goals and Objectives and reviewed the progress status of the CEDS Action Plan receiving updates of each project.

The CEDS Executive Committee met on December 10, 2024. At this meeting they evaluated proposed projects. Three projects did not make it through the evaluation process or were removed by their champion. Two projects were unanimously supported to be forwarded to the CEDS Committee for consideration. The committee also reviewed and edited CEDS – State of the Regional Economy – Strengths and Barriers.

January 13, 2025, the CEDS Committee had their second meeting of the year (originally scheduled for January 6 but had to change due to weather). During the meeting the following occurred:

- Modifications were approved to update Goals and Objectives
 - Goal 1, Objective 3
 - Goal 1, Objective 9 (new)
- Two projects were unanimously approved for inclusion in the document

- NSF Engine: The MidAtlantic COASTAL Project (Coordinated Opportunities Against Saltwater Threats and Limitations)
 - Town of Denton – Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge Management Upgrade
- Removal of existing projects from CEDS Action Plan
 - St. Michaels Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sewer Collection System (completed)
 - Co-Working Initiative – hotDesks (completed)
 - The Arc Port Street Commons Project (completed)
 - Chesapeake Bay Region Water Treatment and Environmental Restoration Project (WTER)
 - Eastern Shore Venture Network
- In the Action Plan there are now 35 projects under the heading “Ongoing”
 - 10 projects are under the heading “Completed”
 - 16 projects are under the heading “Removed”

Mr. Warner then thanked many for their assistance in revising the CEDS:

- Cambridge-Dorchester Regional Airport Director Steve Nuwer assisting with Economic impact of airports found under “Infrastructure” found under “Our Region,”
- USWIB Interim Executive Director Dan McDermott assisting with Unemployment data found under “Our Region,”
- Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Nancy LaJoice assisting with Tax Credits and Incentives found under “Resources,”
- ESRGC GIS Analyst Nastya Suprunova assisting with Dashboard updates including language for updating the CEDS online and printable version, including the statistical sections,
- ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva for all the projects updates, data updates, printable version, and the overall management of the CEDS online update process.

Updates made to the online Mid-Shore CEDS

- Goals & Objectives (as stated above)
- Action Plan (as stated above)
- Investments facilitated by the Mid-Shore CEDS Committee
- History
- Our Region
 - “Demographic & Socioeconomic” section
 - Population
 - Minority Population
 - Education
 - Education Facilities
 - Public School Ratings
 - Income and Poverty
 - Wages
 - Unemployment
 - Labor Force
 - Mobile Workforce
 - Business Establishments
 - Housing
 - “Infrastructure” section

- Airports
 - “Major Industry Clusters” section
 - Tourism
 - “Quality of Life” section
- Economy
 - “Factors Affecting Economic Performance” section
- Resources
 - “Tax Credits and Incentives” section

Mr. Warner stated that the link to the revised CEDS online was e-mailed to you on February 27, 2025, with this meeting’s agenda.

The MSRC will submit the updated CEDS document to the EDA Philadelphia Regional Office once ratified and posted on the website for public comment for 30 days

The updated document can be viewed:

- through the MSRC website www.midshore.org
 - Click on “About,” “Documents,” then “Visit CEDS online”
- or the direct link <https://ceds.midshore.org>

Mr. Detmer made a motion to ratify the CEDS Document. Ms. Spicher seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that 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 approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Reports

Treasurer Kurt Fuchs presented the following financial reports:

MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that all income and expenses are on track for being $\frac{3}{4}$ (three-fourths) through this fiscal year.
- Mr. Warner added that the category of Rent has seen an increase this year because the landlord passed the town and county tax increase to tenants as stated in the lease agreement. This is the first increase to rent since the landlord significantly reduced it thirteen years ago. The MSRC’s rent has not increased until this adjustment. The MSRC’s relationship with the landlord has been terrific.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that there has been little change since he last reported on this, with the exception of payments to the MSRC Capacity Building Coordinator.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Budget

- Mr. Fuchs stated that the only changes that have been made were to payments made to the MSRC accountant and Project Consultant.
- Mr. Warner added that earlier today he, as the MSRC Executive Director, signed two MOUs extending the original termination date to December 31, 2025. All grant objectives and required work and deliverables are to be completed and delivered by January 31, 2026. The MOUs were

between the (1) MSRC and Caroline County and the (2) MSRC and Dorchester County. The MSRC attorney approved the MOUs before they were executed.

- Additionally, the MOU between the MSRC and Talbot County is in the process of being signed by the County officials. The MSRC attorney approved the document this past Monday, March 3.

Mr. Fuchs asked if there were any questions. As there were no questions, Ms. Spicher made a motion to accept all three reports. Mr. Detmer seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that 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 approved unanimously.

Authorizing Resolution to file an application with the MTA for a FY26 Statewide Coordination and Technical Assistance Grant (SCATA)

Mr. Warner stated the MSRC received an email on January 14, 2025, from the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) regarding solicitation information for a Statewide Coordination and Technical Assistance Grant (SCATA).

- The solicitation encompasses the 12-month period for FY2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).
- The grant application submittal deadline is April 11, 2025, at 1:00pm.
- The MSRC has been applying for and administering this grant for many years to support the Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST) program.
- The grant request amount is \$40,000. (The same amount it has been since FY08.) These funds are matched by county funds (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot).
- The MTA process requires an authorizing resolution.

Mr. Warner informed the council the resolution is included in the meeting packets. This is a standard resolution that the MTA has requested over the past several years that the MSRC has applied for the grant.

Mr. Stamp made a motion to approve the authorizing resolution. Mr. Fuchs seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated that we have a motion and a second. Any further discussion? All those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it, motion passed unanimously.

Maryland General Assembly

2025 Legislative session

- *FY2026 Budget – Regional Councils, RMC, RMPIF, and MAERDAF*
- *Other Legislation Issues*

Rural Maryland Council Program Administrator Megan D'Arcy noted that the FY2026 budget is a primary focus this session. She outlined the following key issues:

Education remains one of the primary drivers behind the state's projected \$2.7 billion structural deficit in FY2026. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future represents a significant portion of the state's education budget. The House of

Delegates has rejected the Governor's proposal to reduce funding for community schools and teacher professional development programs. Funding shifts to local governments is happening as well and includes \$186 million in teacher pensions and the elimination of supplemental grants costing local governments an additional \$28 million.

Another major strain on the budget is Medicaid expansion, which grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's budget includes \$4.7 billion for Medicaid, a 26% increase since FY2024.

Ms. D'Arcy talked about how the House and Senate are working towards fixing the deficit. The House is discussing tax reforms under the Fair Share Act, including combined reporting, a tax on sugary drinks, and a potential \$0.75 delivery fee. The Senate seems to be leaning toward budget cuts over new taxes.

Additionally, the Department of Legislative Services has proposed redirecting all land preservation funding from the Transfer Tax to the General Fund for the next four years. This includes funding cuts to MALPF (Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation); Rural Legacy Program; Heritage Areas; Program Open Space (both state and local).

Ms. D'Arcy provided an update on rural programming:

- MARBIDCO (Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation) and SMADC (Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission) were included in the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA).
- Maryland Department of Commerce – As part of the Governor's economic agenda, SB 427/HB 498, also known as the DECADE Act, proposes several changes, including:
 - Renaming the Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Businesses Account (SMWOBA).
 - Moving the Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise (RISE) Zone program out of Commerce.
 - Sunsetting the Maryland Economic Adjustment Fund (MEAF).
 - Reallocating \$25 million to the Economic Development Opportunities Fund, which the Governor wants to rename the Strategic Closing Fund to support business attraction and expansion.
- Discussions on energy and infrastructure are critical, particularly regarding energy generation and solar siting, as well as data centers and transmission lines. These topics will have significant implications for rural communities.
- RMC is funded at \$6 million—with no recommended additional cuts. RMC received a PIN in the first supplemental budget, and we are thrilled to now have four full-time, permanent positions with the State. This is a huge milestone that will provide much-needed stability for our team and enhance our ability to effectively serve Maryland's rural communities.

Kurt Fuchs, RMC Legislative Committee Chair, encouraged people to attend the legislative meetings that are continuing through the session. The meetings are

held by web conference. If anyone needs information on how to join the meetings, please contact Mr. Fuchs, Ms. D'Arcy, or Mr. Warner.

Rural Maryland Day in Annapolis

Greg Padgham, RMC First Vice Chair, summarized the RMC's Rural Maryland Day activities held on February 13, 2025. Teams of rural Maryland supporters met with State of Maryland Senators and Delegates. The teams were made up of RMC board members, supporters, and RMPIF and MAERDAF grant recipients. The teams thanked legislators for their support of rural Maryland and urged them to support the grant programs administered by the RMC.

"Taste of the Eastern Shore" legislative reception

Greg Padgham, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Executive Director, gave an overview of the event. It was held on February 13, 2025, at Graduate Annapolis Hotel, it was the reception's 21st year. It was very well attended by over 350 people. There was 33 paid sponsors. He thanked the MSRC for partnering on the event.

Maryland Day – RMC event Lawyer's Mall, Annapolis

- *March 25 (Tuesday) from 11:00am to 1:00pm*

Everyone was invited to attend the RMC event celebrating Maryland Day.

Highlights of MSRC programs

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner provided the following update.

As a follow up to a meeting with the mid-shore counties' public school superintendents that was held on October 25, the MSRC held meetings on December 13 (Dr. Derek Simmons and Dr. Jymil Thompson) and December 18 (Dr. Sharon Pepukayi, because she could not make the December 13 meeting). The items discussed were:

- transportation
- key contacts from each county who will serve on the committee
 - Lindsey McCormick – Director of College & Career Readiness, Caroline County Public Schools
 - Ashley Robinson – Principal, Dorchester Career and Technology Center
 - Carolanne Burkhart – CTE Curriculum Supervisor, Talbot County Public Schools
- funding – no commitment

Mr. Warner emphasized that the 2024 SCEP was the largest funded project by the MSRC through its RMPIF grant. The MSRC was also the largest funder of the 2024 SCEP.

Regarding the 2025 SCEP:

- It will target rising 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders.

- 8 tracks will be offered:
 - Animation
 - App Development/Gaming
 - Chess
 - Cyber Security
 - Drones
 - Media Arts
 - Presentation/Video Design
 - Robotics
- The total number of slots (including both sessions) will be 300
- Plus, Introduction To Careers in Healthcare (ITCH)
- An Ambassador Program will be offered this year
 - Students who have been in the program before
 - Two classes will be offered – one in each session
 - Each class will consist of 9 students (3 from each county)
 - Superintendents will appoint their counties' students
- Each program will have a 2-week track
- The SCEP will run Monday through Thursday from 9:00am - 1:00pm
 - Session 1: July 7 through July 17
 - Session 2: July 21 through July 31
- The location this year will be Easton High School.
- There have been two videos made of this past year's SCEP to use to promote the program
 - 2024 SCEP: <https://vimeo.com/1038353232>
 - 2024 SCEP short video: <https://vimeo.com/1021945549>

Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC)

Erin Silva, ESRGC Project Manager, gave a presentation using a StoryMap of the following:

- Mid-Shore CEDS online
 - This project was initially completed in FY22 utilizing two years of RMPF investment, FY21 and FY22.
 - It received a 2022 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award.
 - Summarizes a previous 200+ page document into an informative, and engaging website.
 - Features narrative, data, and images to highlight the Mid-Shore's regional economy and provide tools and support for businesses and economic development.
 - CEDS Yearly Updates include:
 - Goals and Objectives
 - Projects: Ongoing, Completed and Removed
 - Investments
 - Text updates (dates, etc)
 - Data Visualizations and Information
 - Unemployment WARN notices
 - Tax Credits and Incentives
 - Printed version

- Delmarva Index website upgrades
 - Initially launched in 2019
 - Support from RMC, RMPIF, MSRC, and TCCLES.
 - Central repository of data and information for Delmarva
 - 60+ individual resources - mostly dashboards
 - Delmarva Index Redesign will:
 - utilize modern design and development standards to upgrade frontend design and backend functionality
 - include enhancements based on user input and committee feedback
 - design improvements to invoke a more data-centric feel
 - streamlined access to data
 - addition of logical categories
 - links directly to products

- Mid-Shore Public Safety Communicator
 - Completed in 2024 and continues to be maintained
 - Delmarva Index project with support from RMC, RMPIF, and MSRC
 - Informs leaders, decision-makers, and residents about the nature and prevalence of crime in Maryland's Mid-Shore communities.
 - Data Source: FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)
 - In 2021, NIBRS replaced the Summary Reporting System (SRS)
 - 13 of 16 Mid-Shore agencies certified and included in FBI's most recent NIBRS data
 - Dashboard contains 2022 & 2023 data
 - Functionality includes
 - Multi-page dashboard visualizing detailed crime statistics
 - multiple filter options to isolate geography, reporting agency, offense type and year.
 - number of incidents and offenses by category and overtime
 - offender demographics
 - incident characteristics
 - advanced filtering is also available allowing users to further refine the data by offender demographics

- Agricultural Census Dashboard
 - Delmarva Index project with support from RMC, RMPIF, MSRC, and TCCLES
 - New dashboard visualizing USDA Agricultural Census data for Maryland
 - Upgrade of the existing Ag Census Infographics
 - Retrieve data and visualizations for hundreds of agriculture related topics
 - Five main topic areas + Summary
 - Economics
 - Producers
 - Crops
 - Livestock
 - Ag Practices
 - Overview and Trend pages
 - Compare across geographies

- Compare overtime (2012, 2017, 2022)

To visit the full presentation which includes clips and product links, go to:
<https://arcg.is/0eSqWj1>

Mr. Warner mentioned that the Eastern Shore Economic Resiliency Project received the following awards:

- 2022 MEDA Economic Development Program Award
- IEDC Regional and Cross Border Collaboration Award
- 2022 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award

Member comments/requests

There were no comments or requests.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m.