

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on June 11, 2026. It was held at the Preston Volunteer Fire Company, Preston Maryland.

MSRC members in attendance included: Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Frank Bartz, Maria D'Arcy, James Redman, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Walter Chase, Delegate Chris Adams, Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Mike Detmer, Talbot County Manager Clay Stamp, and Dorchester County Manager Jerry Jones.

Guests in attendance were: Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser, Tourism Manager Kristen Goller, and consultant Ryan Snow; Town of Trappe Commissioner Mike Sullivan; Tri-County Council of the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland Executive Director Greg Padgham; BEACON Director John Hickman; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board Executive Director Ellen LaFrankie; Chesapeake College Director of Development and Executive Director of the Chesapeake College Foundation Amber McGinnis; Maryland Broadband Cooperative President and CEO Drew Van Dopp and Impact Analyst Megan Speake; Comptroller of Maryland Public Engagement Officer – Eastern Shore Mary Handley; Caroline Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tracey Snyder; Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center Executive Director Mike Thielke; USDA Rural Development Deputy State Director for Delaware-Maryland State Office Letitia Nichols; Salisbury University Dean and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott; ESRGC Project Manager Erin Silva; Choptank Electric Cooperative Vice President of Technical Services Tim McGaha; and Senator John Mautz's representatives Spencer Rada (District Manager) and Sofia Antonelli (intern).

MSRC staff present were Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 5:23 p.m. and introductions were made. Chairman Chase was carrying a proxy for Senator Johnny Mautz. Clay Stamp was carrying proxies for Chuck Callahan and Lynn Mielke. Mike Detmer was carrying a proxy for Ricky Travers. Jerry Jones was carrying a proxy for Lenny Pfeffer. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Kurt Fuchs.

Action Items

Approval of March 5, 2026, Minutes

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve the March 5, 2026, minutes 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.

Ratification of Executive Board November 24, 2025, Minutes

Mr. Christopher made a motion to ratify the Executive Board November 24, 2025, minutes. Delegate Chris Adams 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 30, 2026, Minutes

Mr. Christopher made a motion to ratify the Executive Board April 30, 2026, minutes. Mr. Stamp 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

Chairman Chase stated in Treasurer Kurt Fuchs absence, Secretary James Redman will be presenting the Treasurer's Report. Secretary Redman presented the following financial reports.

MSRC Operating Budget

- Mr. Redman stated all income and expenses are on track for being the end of this fiscal year and would entertain any questions. He then asked for a motion.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve the report 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.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) Budget

- Mr. Redman stated the only changes since the RMPIF budget report was made at the MSRC meeting on March 5, 2026, are under "MSRC Capacity Building Coordinator" line item as these costs are accrued monthly and "Entrepreneurship Training Program" line item as this program just completed.

Ms. Spicher made a motion to approve the report. Ms. D'Arcy 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.

RMPIF FY26 mid-year Budget

- Mr. Redman stated the funds were received by MSRC on June 9, 2026. A check was issued to People for Change Coalition for the 2026 Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) on June 10, 2026, and it will be handed to Sandy Pruitt next Tuesday, June 16, when Jerry and Sandy come to tour North Dorchester High School (site of 2026 SCEP).

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the report 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.

Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Budget

- Mr. Redman stated that this is the final budget report for this grant and all \$10,000,000.00 has been expended.
- Mr. Warner stated funds were used as follows:
 - 97.7% (\$9,767,185.91) of total grant funds went to funding projects. The counties each accounting for one-third of funds: Caroline (33.3%), Dorchester (33.6%), and Talbot (33.1%).
 - 2.3% (\$232,914.09) of total grant funds went to administrative costs. This was lower than the grant allowance of three percent.
 - The three counties combined accounted for 1.0% (\$102,918.33) of total grant administrative costs.
 - MSRC accounted for 1.3% (\$129,895.76) of total grant administrative costs.
 - Mr. Warner thanked the county partners, noting that keeping the administrative costs under the three percent allowance was very impressive, especially since the grant was originally a two-year grant that took three and a half years to complete.

Mr. Detmer made a motion to approve as presented. 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.

Approval of FY27 Scope of Work

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 30 and May 27, 2026, the board reviewed and discussed the scope of work. During the May 27 meeting they approved for the full Council's consideration the FY27 Scope of Work. There are no changes to the FY27 Scope of Work. It is the same as FY26.

Mr. Detmer made a motion to approve the FY27 Scope of Work. Mr. Redman 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 FY27 Budget

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 30 and May 27, 2026, the board reviewed and discussed the budget. During the May 27 meeting they approved for the full Council's consideration of the MSRC's FY27 operating budget. He noted that the changes to the FY27 budget compared to the FY26 budget were in Fringe Benefits, Advertising, Memberships, Rent, and Indirect. The changes in Fringe Benefits were: 5% increase in health care, 5% increase in dental care, and 21% increase in life

insurance. Advertising had a slight increase for advertising in newspaper for the MSRC quarterly meetings and CEDS public notice. Memberships increased as the MSRC would like to join NARC (National Association of Regional Councils); the organization that partnered with NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) to produce the MSRC film this past summer. Rent increased because the landlord passed on increased Town of Easton and Talbot County taxes. Indirect had a slight increase.

Delegate Adams made a motion to approve the FY27 budget 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.

Including Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds

Mr. Warner reminded everyone that the State of Maryland budget included \$6 million in the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) for FY27. This is a \$3 million reduction from full funding of \$9 million. This amount is the same as last year. Therefore, RMPIF will be providing the MSRC with a grant totaling \$385,000, a reduction of \$215,000 as compared to full funding.

Mr. Warner stated that during the Executive Board's meetings on April 30 and May 27, 2026, the board reviewed and discussed. During the May 27 meeting they approved for the full Council's consideration, the MSRC's FY27 RMPIF budget.

Mr. Warner noted 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 FY2027 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF). This document was included in the meeting packet. It is in the same form as the actual grant that is being prepared.

The RMPIF grant application is to be submitted to the Rural Maryland Council by August 3, 2026. Regional Planning and Development Councils have a rolling application process from 4/27/26 to 8/3/26.

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) \$60,165 – an investment to financially assist in the expenses for a F3 Tech Facility Administrator, a position that will oversee day-to-day operations, maintenance, tenant support, and business development activities for the F3 Tech Biomanufacturing Facility in Easton, Maryland. This role combines facility operations, laboratory coordination, customer relations, and strategic outreach to support the growth of Maryland's emerging agricultural biotechnology and bio industrial manufacturing ecosystem.

3) Delmarva Index \$15,000 – Continue working with the 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 IX will add additional value to the Index through continued maintenance and updates to Mid-Shore Hires, Mid-Shore CEDS, EDA Tools, Maryland Parks Dashboard, Public Safety Dashboard, Workforce Infographics, Economic Dashboard, Healthcare Economic Impact Dashboard, Construction Economic Impact Dashboard, Manufacturing Economic Impact Dashboard, Tourism Economic Impact Dashboard, and Economic Snapshots (Somerset and Talbot).

4) Circuit Rider \$30,000 – 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.

5) Maryland Agricultural Reporting Tool (MART) \$14,413 – In FY2024, the ESRGC partnering with the University of Maryland Extension, and supported by the Rural Maryland Council and Maryland's regional councils developed Phase One of the Maryland Agriculture Reporting Tool (MART) <https://mdagreporting.org/>. MART is a free, secure online platform designed to simplify recordkeeping, improve decision-making, and help Maryland farm producers meet both state and federal reporting requirements. Partners will work together to improve upon the existing application by expanding services and streamlining functionality. Phase II enhancements will include the development of an animal agriculture component to the existing MART platform allowing farmers working with animal manure to track and report the fields where it is applied and associated details. This will be similar in form and function to the existing Annual Implementation Report (AIR) table within the application that tracks nutrients for grain producers. Enhancements also include some minor modifications to the existing forms on the application that will help streamline data entry for users.

6) MSRC Website Updates \$12,972 – The Mid-Shore Regional Council website at <https://midshore.org/> is the main communication hub for the Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC). It serves as a consistent and reliable place for the MSRC to publish information about the organization, its activity, members, committees, projects, documents, and partners. The last major updates were completed nearly ten years ago by the ESRGC. The site continues to be updated and maintained by the ESRGC, however, has reached a stage where more intervention is needed. Back-end upgrades such as a content management system (CMS) and modern web frameworks will enable faster, more flexible updates and improve site loading times as well as overall user experience. In addition, design updates to modernize the website will reflect the

MSRC organizational mission and ensure the site meets current accessibility standards.

7) MSRC CEDS Updates \$2,500 – In FY2022, the ESRGC and the Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) launched the Mid-Shore CEDS website <https://ceds.midshore.org/>. This online resource was developed based on extensive content in the original CEDS document. A narrative content review is not included in the annual maintenance costs and as a result some of the language appears outdated and may not accurately reflect the current conditions in the Mid-Shore. While a yearly content review is not necessary, it is suggested to perform every 3-5 years to ensure messaging, references, etc. remain current. The ESRGC will work with the MSRC to strategically update existing language on the Mid-Shore CEDS website to ensure it is communicating a current and comprehensive regional narrative.

8) Summer Career Enrichment Program \$67,500 – The Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP) is a 4-week program aimed at providing middle school students with hands-on activities and training in Animation, Chess, Media Arts, and Presentation Design 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 Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties' public-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 how to become entrepreneurs 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.

9) Mark C. Perna \$6,000 – provide insight into the Summer Career Enrichment Program and how it may or may not be leveraged by the three mid-shore counties' public-school systems (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) to further engage students in finding their interest in potential career paths.

10) Entrepreneurship Training Program \$82,500 – 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.

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 may have to be adjusted since sponsorships for the program are still being secured.

- If the SCEP funding needs to be increased, it is the Executive Board's recommendation to pull the funds from one or both of these projects:
 - MSRC Website Redesign

- Additional CEDS updates.
- If the SCEP funding can be lowered, it is the Executive Board's recommendation to move the additional funds to ESEC.

Therefore, can the motion to pass the RMPF budget have a stipulation to allow the MSRC Executive Board to move funds as described to balance the SCEP budget? This would be similar to the action taken the last two years.

Mr. Stamp made a motion to approve the FY27 RMPF budget as presented with the recommended adjustments if necessary. Mr. Jones 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

Grant and projects completed

Mr. Warner provided the following updates on behalf of Dr. Sarah Guy, who could not be present tonight.

- The RMEDF grant period ended May 31, 2026, with final reports to the Maryland Department of Commerce by June 30, 2026.
- In the past five months, the following projects have been completed:
 - Choptank Marina Infrastructure Improvement
 - Denton Industrial Park Improvement
 - Rails-to-Trails
 - Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan – Workforce Development Initiative
- Work continues on a few RMEDF projects with the use of other funding sources.
- All grant funds have been fully expended.
- Final reports and grant close-out documentation were submitted to Commerce this morning, June 11, 2026.
- Dr. Guy would like to thank all project administrators, economic development directors and their staff, and MSRC for their time and effort in completing the required reports throughout the duration of this grant.

Mr. Warner then shared via a slide show pictures of projects sent to him by the county's economic development directors and other representatives. Projects included:

- Cambridge Harbor Street scape Design and Partial Construction (Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc.)
- Denton Industrial Park Improvement
- Choptank Marina Infrastructure Improvement
- Future Work Workforce Training (Chesapeake College)
- Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

Also in the slide show was a picture of the most recent cohort of the Dorchester entrepreneurship training program – B.E.A.M.S. (Business Expansion and Advancement for Minority & Small Businesses) Academy.

Next, Mr. Warner shared the F3 Tech Biomanufacturing Facility video produced for the Talbot County Community Impact Awards. The video provides a great overview of the purpose of this biomanufacturing facility.

Mike Thielke, Executive Director of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC), provided a brief update on the F3 Tech Biomanufacturing Facility. He stated ESEC continues to make steady progress in building out Maryland's emerging bioindustries ecosystem here on the Eastern Shore. There are currently two companies engaged with the facility.

- Mycologics is preparing to advance the refinement and scale-up of its technology platform and anticipates bringing on an additional employee this summer as those activities ramp up.
- Hyacinth Protein is in the final stages of refining its proprietary purification system while assembling the resources necessary to install that capability within the facility. Their focus is on providing specialized, high-value specimen purification services that are in growing demand among biotechnology companies.

In parallel, F3 Tech is preparing to hire a facility administrator this summer to support day-to-day operations, tenant engagement, and continued growth of the facility.

Beyond the walls of the facility itself, F3 Tech continues to play a leadership role in convening and strengthening the Mid-Shore's growing biotechnology community, fostering collaboration among companies and organizations such as Eurofins, Aphenia Pharma Solutions, Ferry Cove Shellfish Hatchery, and Vetagro, which is expected to establish operations in the region in the near future.

Collectively, these developments position F3 Tech well for the next phase of activity as ESEC continues building the region's capacity in biomanufacturing and biotechnology.

Highlights of MSRC programs

Entrepreneurship Training Program

Mr. Warner reminded the Council and attendees this program is a partnership with the mid-shore counties' economic development offices and Will Holmes Consulting.

Bob Zimmeroff (Director, Caroline County Economic Development and Tourism) was unable to attend the meeting; however, provided Mr. Warner with an update. Mr. Warner presented the following:

- Economic Edge: The Caroline County Business Academy held its final presentation and virtual graduation on Tuesday, June 9.
- This year, there were 10 graduates in the second cohort after eight graduates in the first cohort in 2025.
- All 18 graduates are women business owners and business leaders.
- A number of the graduates in the second cohort said the class came at just the right time for them. They were inspired to believe in themselves and grow their businesses.

- One of the graduates said she was close to giving up, but the class was reinvigorating, gave her more confidence and more tools to succeed.
- Another graduate was inspired to completely change her business model and is transitioning into that new business model with assistance from Caroline County Economic Development.
- Four of the businesses have expressed interest in growing their staff and creating new positions within 18 months. Other businesses have long-term plans to generate new jobs as a result of the class.
- Overall, this cohort was a huge success.

Due to Susan Banks (Director, Dorchester County Economic Development) not being able to attend the meeting, she provided Mr. Warner with an update. Mr. Warner presented the following:

- B.E.A.M.S. (Business Expansion and Advancement for Minority & Small Businesses) Academy had 9 graduates from this second cohort.
- Since graduating, most have adjusted pricing and revenue strategy
- 100% of the class has increased confidence as a business owner after taking BEAMS
- Some Quotes:
 - "The biggest shift has been using tangible measurable numbers to plan and strategize"
 - "Confidence, willing to trust the plan and the process."
 - "The opportunity and belief to grow."
 - "The biggest shift for me was understanding my tax implications and the legalities of my business. Having a lawyer and the accounting/CPA mentor really helped me in an area that I was struggling with before this class."
 - "Shifting my mindset and realizing I have the ability to change everything about my business."

Cassandra Vanhooser (Director, Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism) provided a recap of the Talbot Works Business Academy.

- This year completed their 4th cohort.
- She stated that participants in this cohort were a mix of new business owners and people had successful, established businesses, all looking for some guidance. Since graduation, the businesses have started to report how they have implemented what they learned and how their operations have expanded.
- Ms. Vanhooser elaborated on how successful the program has been over the past few years and the collection of businesses that have utilized this training to strengthen and grow. She thanked the MSRC for its partnership and support. Additionally, she praised the expansion of the program in Caroline and Dorchester counties and looks forward to the program's continued growth.

Summer Career Enrichment Program (SCEP)

Mr. Warner stated the SCEP will be conducted in July.

He showed the promotional video from last year's program.

This year the SCEP will be held at North Dorchester High School.

He strongly encouraged everyone to take the time and tour the program this year whether they have visited it before or not. Tour dates will be distributed via email in the coming weeks. Please respond and come to see this fabulous program.

Presentation

Maryland Broadband Cooperative (Mdbc)

Mdbc President and CEO Drew Van Dopp gave a presentation showing how the Cooperative has grown over the years. He stated that Mdbc is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Established in 2006 as there was a lack of affordable, reliable broadband across Maryland. On May 15, 2006, the Five Regional Councils took decisive action to address Maryland's rural broadband crisis by incorporating Mdbc as the state's only Open Access, all fiber optic middle-mile network. They then set out the hard, necessary work to establish a framework for long-term sustainable mission success, by establishing Bylaws, Board Policies, and a Vision for transforming Rural Maryland.

As founding Class A Members, the Regional Councils secured critical resources and established a statewide broadband framework focused on economic development and quality of life. This bold, consensus-driven initiative laid the groundwork for everything that has come after

Today, Mdbc operates 2,500 miles of fiber infrastructure across Maryland and Virginia, with 33 points of presence supporting healthcare, education, government, public safety, and private sectors. Critical connectivity reaches rural and underserved communities throughout the region. Maryland General Assembly's Senate Bill 68 reinforces Mdbc's rights-of-way access, enabling continued expansion of the fiber-optic backbone. Mdbc is a national leading model assisting with statewide broadband services.

Future growth and innovation include Maryland's first-ever subsea fiber cable connecting the state to Ireland — the AWS FastNet project — marks a historic milestone. This international link opens new doors for data exchange, global commerce, and positions Maryland's Eastern Shore as a critical node in the global digital economy.



LinkedIn



www.mdbc.us

Event

Mr. Warner stated our next meeting will include our annual tour. The executive board confirmed the date to be Friday, September 18, 2026. This year's tour will address "electric" in our three counties with a special stop at an updated Maryland Broadband Cooperative's PoP (Point of Presence).

Announcements/comments

Mr. Stamp announced Cassandra Vanhooser's resignation as the Director of the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism. She has worked for Talbot County for over 13 years. Ms. Vanhooser has accepted the position as Managing Director of the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism.

Mr. Warner thanked Ms. Vanhooser for her wonderful partnership and collaboration over the years. She has been a tremendous supporter of the MSRC and it is much appreciated.

We all wish Ms. Vanhooser well in her new endeavor.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.