

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) held a scheduled meeting on March 3, 2022. It was held virtually via web conference. The meeting was facilitated from the MSRC office with three MSRC members (Walter Chase, Burton Wilson, and James Redman) and MSRC staff (Scott Warner and Terry Deighan) present.

MSRC members in attendance included: Walter Chase, Burton Wilson, James Redman, Anthony Casey, Lenny Pfeffer, Jerome Stanley, Bill Christopher, Carolyn Spicher, Wilbur Levengood, Allen Nelson, Dan Rider, Frank Divilio, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, and Joyce Harrod.

Guests in attendance were: Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) Director Michael Scott and Project Manager Erin Silva; Chesapeake College President Clifford Coppersmith; U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's Eastern Shore Regional Director Melissa Kelly; U.S. Senator Ben Cardin's Field Representative Kim Kratovil; Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks; Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism Director Cassandra Vanhooser; Easton Town Councilman Al Silverstein; University of Maryland Extension Educator Shannon Dill; Choptank Electric Government Affairs Manager Matt Tefteau; Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) retiring Executive Director Dan McDermott and new Executive Director Daniel Schneckenburger; TEDCO Rural Business Innovation Initiative Mentor Bill Bernard; Rural Maryland Council (RMC) Executive Director Charlotte Davis; USDA Rural Development State Director David Baker and Business and Cooperative Programs Director Letitia Nichols; Senator Eckardt's assistant Erin O'Neill; Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLES) Executive Director Greg Padgham, Executive Coordinator Stephanie Wilkins, and Regional Communications Developer Monique Snyder; Chesapeake Culinary Center Executive Director Beth Brewster; Shore Gourmet Program Director Roxanne Wolf; Delmarva Community Services President and CEO Santo Grande; Easton Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Tracy Ward; Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Mindie Burgoyne; Dorchester Young Professionals representative Stephanie Hallowell; Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) Executive Director Mike Thielke and Administration Assistant Emiliano Espinosa; Governor Larry Hogan's Eastern Shore Outreach Coordinator Grayson Middleton; and Talbot County Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Amy Kreiner. MSRC staff present was Scott Warner and Terry Deighan.

Action Items

Chairman Chase called the meeting to order at 11:07 AM after Mr. Warner and Ms. Deighan completed checking members in and taking attendance. Mr. Warner was in possession of electronic votes from Ricky Travers and Kurt Fuchs who could not attend in person due to other obligations.

Approval of December 8, 2021, Minutes

The first order of business was to obtain approval for the December 8, 2021, minutes. Mr. Stanley made a motion to accept the minutes. Mr. Nelson seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion carried unanimously.

Ratification of revised Mid-Shore CEDS

Mr. Warner began the summary of the CEDS revision process by stating that the Mid-Shore CEDS has now transitioned from a static paper document to an online version. The MSRC has been working for two years with the ESRGC to accomplish this goal. The CEDS Committee has been receiving progress updates during this time.

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

The Full CEDS Committee met on October 6, 2021. At that meeting they were reminded that the 1st CEDS document was submitted to EDA on October 16, 2002. The committee received updates of the 31 projects in the Action Plan. The GPRA Data Collection period FY21 (7/1/20 to 6/30/21) reported:

- 23 projects reported funding, jobs, and/or investment activity
- 250.25 estimated number of jobs created or retained

During the meeting the committee reviewed and revised the CEDS Goals and Objectives and reviewed the progress status of CEDS Action Plan.

The CEDS Executive Committee met on November 29, 2021. They evaluated 3 proposed projects. Two projects needed more consideration by their champions and updated project writeups should be resubmitted next year. One project was unanimously supported to be forwarded to the CEDS Committee for consideration. The committee contemplated how to update the CEDS Project Evaluation Guidelines. Since projects are submitted for inclusion on the CEDS, not for EDA funding, but for USDA or state funding, the CEDS Committee may want to update the evaluation process. The CEDS Executive Committee agreed to examine these guidelines in 2022 and come up with a recommendation(s) to present to the CEDS Committee in Fall 2022.

On January 5, 2022, the full CEDS Committee had their second meeting of the year.

- During the meeting the committee approved modifications to update Goals and Objectives:
 - Goal 1
 - Goal 1, Objective 1
 - Goal 3, Objectives 1 and 4
 - Goal 4, Objectives 6 (deleted) and 8
 - Goal 7, Objective 1
- One project was unanimously approved for inclusion in the document
 - The Arc Port Street Commons Project
- Presentation on the progress of the online CEDS
- 32 projects are included in the revised CEDS Action Plan

A big thank you to Project Manager Erin Silva for leading the ESRGC team on the conversion from the CEDS document to the online CEDS. The new document has wonderful creativity and clarity.

Thank you to GIS Programmer Tim Lanzi for all the computer programming of the new website and ESRGC Project Manager Ryan Mello with assisting with the transition of the static statistical sections to the online links.

Mr. Warner thanked the following organizations/people for their assistance in revising the CEDS document. He mentioned the specific sections each assisted.

- Unemployment data found under “Our Region”
 - USWIB Executive Director Dan McDermott.
- Tax Credits and Incentives found under “Resources”
 - Maryland Department of Commerce Senior Business Development Representative Nancy LaJoice

Updates to the following sections were provided by the MSRC:

- Landing page > Goals and Objectives
- CEDS Project Evaluation Guidelines (PEG) > Step 1: Meets CEDS Goals
- CEDS Evaluation Worksheet
- Landing > Projects (new project added)
- About > History (updated dates)
- Our Region > Media
- Committee > CEDS Committee Members

Mr. Warner stated that the directions on how to view the revised document which is now the CEDS online version was e-mailed to everyone on February 28, 2022, with this meeting’s agenda.

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

The updated document can be viewed on the MSRC website www.midshore.org, click on “About”, “Documents”, then “Visit CEDS online”. Alternatively, the CEDS can be accessed using the direct link, <https://ceds.midshore.org>.

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to ratify the CEDS document. Mr. Stanley seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report

In Treasurer Fuch’s absence Secretary Redman presented three reports to the board.

MSRC Operating Budget

The first report was the MSRC Operating budget. He stated that all income and expenses are on track.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Budget

Next, Mr. Redman addressed the RMPIF budget stating nothing has changed since the MSRC meeting on December 8, 2021.

Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 Project Budget

Mr. Redman asked Mr. Warner to summarize this report. Mr. Warner stated that this project is on track with all partners drawing down funds, and monies should be fully expended by June.

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to accept all three reports. Mr. Nelson seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

Authorizing Resolution to file an application with the MTA for a FY23 Statewide Coordination and Technical Assistance Grant (SCATA)

Mr. Warner stated the MSRC received a letter dated January 26, 2022, 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 FY2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023).
- The grant application submittal deadline is April 28, 2022, at 3:30pm.
- 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 that the resolution is in their meeting packets. This is a standard resolution that the MTA has requested over the past several years that the MSRC has applied for this grant.

Mr. Pfeffer made a motion to approve the authorizing resolution. Mr. Redman seconded the motion. Chairman Chase stated we have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All in favor signify by stating aye; those opposed have the same rights. Ayes have it. Motion approved unanimously.

Presentation

Mid-Shore Hires – Regional Marketing Project

Mr. Warner stated that this project was supported by a PNC Bank grant that was provided to Talbot, Dorchester, and Caroline counties. The regional grant is facilitated by PNC Bank's partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA). The counties asked the MSRC to facilitate the project.

Partners on the project were:

- Caroline County Economic Development Office
- Dorchester County Economic Development Office
- Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism
- Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
- Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC)

The final report was submitted in December 2021. On February 2, 2022, an email regarding the press release was sent to the MSRC membership. The website is midshorehires.org. (midshorehires.com and hires.midshore.org are redirected to midshorehires.org)

Mr. Warner introduced Erin Silva, ESRGC Project Manager, who gave a slide show presentation.

This website was created with input from all the participant partners on the project.

The resources under the three main categories on the website were highlighted and explained. The categories are:

- Locating Employees
- Attracting Employees
- Retaining Employees

The resources under the categories are listed as follows:

Recruit Better. Retain Longer.

- Define who you are to better attract and keep the staff you require.
 - Job Boards & Jobseeker Sites
 - Recruiters & Staffing Consultants

Develop your talent pipeline

- Developing a Career Page
- Looking Within
- Networking with Community
- Nonprofit and Government Partnerships

Attract Top Talent

- Fresh Idea: Be so good they want to work with you
- Your Company. Your Brand.
- Diversity is Tremendous
- Competitive Perks & Benefits

Employee Retention Pays

- Employees are your greatest asset, don't squander them.
- Why Retention Matters

Best Practices

- Competitive Compensation
- Rewards and Recognition

Updates

Eastern Shore Economic Recovery COVID-19 Project

Mr. Warner reminded the Council that the Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project has been formulated to assist the Mid-Shore and Lower Eastern Shore counties (the region) utilizing trusted, proven partnerships to develop economic recovery and resiliency technical platforms to provide technical assistance to local governments, businesses, and other organizations that work within the region. Since the project's inception, it has been built on the Economic Resilience sections of the Mid-Shore and Lower Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). The outcomes of this project will be incorporated into both CEDS, as well as other online technical assistance tools managed by the partners.

Mr. Warner then listed the committee members:

- Scott Warner, Mid-Shore Regional Council
- Greg Padgham, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
- Mike Scott, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative
- Lauren McDermott, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative
- Erin Silva, Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative
- Dan McDermott, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Debbie Bowden, Caroline County Economic Development Office
- Susan Banks, Dorchester County Economic Development Office
- Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism

He also informed everyone of the other partners that have been added to the committee in the last few months:

- John Hickman, BEACON Director
- Susan O'Neill, Upper Shore Regional Council Executive Director

Mr. Warner then reviewed the length of time involved in this project and the progress made.

Length of time:

- Conversations on this project started in April 2020.
- Formal meetings started on August 5, 2020, with the latest meeting on February 22, 2022. The meetings are held every two weeks.
- Formal meetings started on August 5, 2020. Meetings are held on average every two weeks. The latest meeting was held on February 22, 2022. It was the 38th formal meeting of the committee.

Progress:

Tool 1 - Eastern Shore Economic Recovery central website has been completed and Launched.

Tool 2 - Maryland Tax Revenue Dashboards have been completed and launched.

The committee continues to monitor and update these applications (Tool 1 and 2) with new data whenever possible.

Tool 3 - Local Business Sentiment Surveys

- The committee worked with BEACON to design and conduct two surveys.
 - June 2021 and December 2021
- The committee built and deployed the business sentiment dashboard enabling the committee to visualize and filter the survey results.
- The committee also developed an infographic to summarize and communicate the survey results for public distribution.
- The committee reached out to the Lower Shore economic development directors. The Lower Shore participated in the second survey.
- The committee reached out to the Upper Shore Regional Council and the Upper Shore economic development directors. The Upper Shore will participate in the next survey.

Tool 4 - Tourism Revenue Dashboard. It is currently under development.

The committee was also heavily engaged in community outreach, promotion, and education activities with participation in a total of 23 events from July 2021 to December 2021 with a total of 962 attendees. This includes in-person and virtual presentations, conference attendance, development of marketing materials, and promotion on social media platforms.

Additionally, the counties will be holding many outreach events in the coming weeks.

Additional Grant from State of Maryland:

Mr. Warner stated that on February 25, 2022, he met with Maryland Department of Commerce representative Jim Palma at Mr. Palma's request to discuss the inclusion of the Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project (ESERP) in the State of Maryland's EDA non-compete grant. This was a follow-up from the State's request on September 2, 2021. Under this grant the GIS-centric tools created under the ESERP will be expanded and datasets will cover the entire state. Other attendees Mr. Warner included in the meeting were Greg Padgham (TCCLES), Erin Silva (ESRGC), and Nancy LaJoice (Maryland Department of Commerce).

Annie's Project

Chairman Chase introduced Shannon Dill, Maryland Cooperative Extension Educator, to provide an update on Annie's Project. Ms. Dill thanked the MSRC for their support of the Women in Ag program. She stated that all classes are in person now; they have however, kept the online attendance available as it makes it accessible for more people to attend the meetings. Ms. Dill added that a Fall Farm tour with 28 participants was held. Three farms were visited along with lunch at Chesapeake Culinary Center / Shore Gourmet.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

Chairman Chase introduced Mike Thielke, ESEC Executive Director, to give a presentation on ESEC.

Mr. Thielke shared ESEC's mission, vision, and focus as well as highlighted five main areas of concentration:

Mission - Solving regional problems through the attraction of innovation and technology

Vision - Creation of a national hub of talent, innovation, technology & resources that drives regional economic prosperity

Focus - Built upon the region's traditional industries of agriculture and seafood
Agritech • Aquatech • Envirotech • Value-Added

Current initiatives:

- Revolving Loan Funds – Money is available to borrow from 4 different funding sources.
- hotDesks – Shared work environments, providing large WiFi bandwidth, conference areas, ability to network, and access to all locations with your membership.

- F3 Tech - Commercializing Innovations and Technologies in Agriculture and Aquaculture.
- Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center - Business Services that help Value-Add Producers grow and scale their businesses throughout Maryland and Delaware
- Cyber Ag - Provides cybersecurity outreach, awareness, education, and access to resources for the agriculture and food supply chain. We exist at the crossroads of agriculture and cybersecurity to help harden the posture of this critical national security pillar.

Maryland General Assembly

2022 Legislative Session

Chairman Chase introduced Charlotte Davis, Rural Maryland Council (RMC) Executive Director.

Ms. Davis stated that the Governor's proposed FY2023 budget includes funding for the Regional Councils, RMC, Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF), and Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF). The Governor honored the RMC's request to increase the RMPIF to \$9 million. The MAERDAF is funded at \$118,485. The legislators seem to be supportive of this amount, but there is always a chance this number could be reduced in the final budget. Fortunately, there is an abundance on money in the state due to federal COVID and ARPA funds.

Ms. Davis also stated that there are federal funds for broadband in the FY2023 State's Capital budget of \$171 million and \$163 million for grants to schools for fiber and broadband projects.

Rural Economic Development Fund – Governor announced 2/18/22

Mr. Warner provided a summary of what the MSRC office has learned about this proposed fund since Governor Hogan's announcement. He stated that he sent emails to the MSRC membership and economic development directors on February 18 and 25 to share this information.

The Governor announced the investment of \$50 million to establish the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund. This will equate to \$10 million to each of the 5 regional/tri-county councils across the State, (funds are being added to the Maryland Department of Commerce's budget through a supplemental budget).

This creates a grant fund for critical, local economic development projects. Eligible uses include:

- Infrastructure, such as utilities and transportation and broadband,
- Industry sector development, such as manufacturing, cybersecurity, and life sciences,
- Workforce development, including job training programs, and
- Projects that stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation.

“Grants will be available to boost economic development, stimulate private-sector investment and grow jobs in rural parts of the state. Five rural regional councils will

submit proposals to the Maryland Department of Commerce outlining how they plan to use up to \$10 million.” (By Associated Press)

The funds may not be used for any direct incentives to the private sector.

On February 18 Maryland Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary Heather Gramm reached out to speak to the regional council executive directors to tell them what the Governor was announcing.

- 2:45pm there was a web conference with Leanne Mazer (Tri-County Council for Western Maryland), Susan O’Neill (Upper Shore Regional Council), and John Hartline (Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland)
- 3:10pm phone call with Scott Warner (Mr. Warner was unable to get on the 2:45pm call due to a doctor’s appointment.)
- Greg Padgham (TCCLES) heard about the announcement while in the press conference held in Salisbury at 3:00pm.

February 25 Heather Gramm held a web conference with the five regional council directors, economic development directors from the fifteen counties represented by the regional councils, and Maryland Department of Commerce representatives. The information shared was the basic framework that was explained to the regional council representatives during the February 18 meeting.

- Ms. Gramm did mention that if the Program is included in the budget, the grant process between the regional councils and Commerce would begin in early May when Commerce would distribute applications for funding. The regional councils’ proposals would be due back to Commerce in mid-Summer.

The regional council executive directors and RMC executive director have been communicating since this announcement.

- February 24 and 25 the five rural regional council executive directors and the RMC Executive Director met via web conference to discuss the Rural Economic Development Fund announcement.

Announcements/comments

Mr. Warner stated there will be a Shore Gourmet Board of Directors meeting held on March 14 and if anyone had interest in attending or had any questions to please contact the MSRC office.

Adjourn

Chairman Chase adjourned the meeting at 12:26 PM.