

Mid Shore Regional Council
Caroline Country Club
Caroline County

The Mid-Shore Regional Council held a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting on March 22, 2007 at the Caroline Country Club. Members in attendance included; Allen Nelson, Bill Brooks, Burton Wilson, Carolyn Spicher, Father LaBarge, Effie Elzey, Ellery Adams, Gale Nashold, Jeff Ghrist, Judy Noel, Lin Spicer, and Walter Chase. MSRC staff members present were: Scott Warner and Terry Deighan. County Managers/Administrators present were: Charles Cawley. Economic Development Directors present were: JOK Walsh, Paige Bethke, and Brad Broadwell. Also in attendance were Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development Regional Representative Mindie Burgoyne and Executive Director of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center Fred Smyth. Several guests were also in attendance; Easton Elementary School Principal James Redman, Bud Hankins of the League of Women Voters of the Mid-Shore and Assistant Director of the Maryland Farm Bureau Kurt Fuchs.

Chairman Nelson called the meeting to order approximately 5:35 p.m. and introductions were made since there were several new members present.

Action Items

The first order of business was approval of December 13, 2006 Minutes. Chairman Nelson asked for a motion to approve which was given by Father LaBarge and seconded by Mr. Chase and approved by all.

The second order of business was ratification of the minutes from the September 13, 2006 Executive Board meeting. Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve as written that was seconded by Father LaBarge and approved unanimously.

In Mayor Rippons absence Chairman Nelson presented the treasurer's report to the Board for review. Father LaBarge made a motion to accept the report as submitted, Mr. Smyth seconded the motion and the report was passed by unanimous consent.

Old Business

Progress on MSRC Legislation items

Mr. Warner explained the progress on HB61/SB440, which is the legislation that updates the Annotated Code of Maryland Article 20C which formed the MSRC. He stated that HB61 had a hearing on 2/6/07 by the Environmental Matters Committee, passed the House on 2/15/07 (134-0), first reading in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on 2/19/07. Also that SB440 had a hearing on 3/7/07, has not yet made it out of the Judicial Proceedings Committee and the cross over date for the passed bills is Monday, March 26

Update on MSRC becoming an EDA Economic Development District

Mr. Warner explained to the Board that the EDA Philadelphia office is working with the Washington, DC office on this process. The MSRC staff is supplying the requested information to the Philadelphia office as they request it. Calvin Edghill believes we will be an EDD within the next several months.

Effort to increase the state funding to the five Rural Regional Councils

This request was to get an additional \$300,000 for all five Rural Regional Councils (\$60,000 for each Council) in FY08 from the state in the DBED budget. Mr. Warner explained that the DBED budget for FY08 is the same as last year, \$140,000 for each Council and it is very doubtful that the request to raise the budget to the requested \$200,000 will be successful.

Update on the effort to fund the 2020 Rural Prosperity Investment Fund

Mr. Warner stated that the Fund is divided into four categories:

1. Rural Regional Councils (directly)
2. Rural Entrepreneurship (youth, small business, Ag development, etc.) – could be used for ESEC
3. Regional Infrastructure (up to 25% of project cost, 2 or more local governments involved; everything from water and wastewater to workforce housing is potentially eligible)
4. MAERDAF – Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (Ag education and regional nonprofit economic and community development; as well as rural research)

The Regional Councils are working through the Rural Maryland Council to acquire funding for this initiative and the goal was to get \$2 million in FY08 and FY09 budget with a possible additional \$2 million in FY09. The only avenue to fund the 2020 Rural Prosperity Investment Fund was the Green Fund and this bill has already unfortunately been tabled.

Update/history on Mid-Shore Regional Council projects

Maryland Broadband Cooperative

Mr. Warner gave the following history on the broadband effort-

There has been an objective to have high speed redundant, reliable internet service on the Eastern Shore for over 9 years.

Several studies have been completed (examples: Shore Net, Yankee Group). The MSRC CEDS document has had it as an infrastructure goal since its first printing on October 12, 2002.

The Rural Regional Councils have been working together on this objective for at least six years.

Senator Pipkin drafted SB753 last legislative session and with the backing of Senator Middleton, Delegate Conway, Rural Caucus, rural legislators, Rural Maryland Council, Governor Ehrlich, DBED, and others – the bill became law. It

enabled the MdBC to obtain state funds as follows: \$2 million in FY07, \$4 million in FY08, and \$4 million in FY09.

Senator Mikulski had the federal government appropriate \$2 million in FY07.

Senator Mikulski and Governor O'Malley are trying to secure \$4 million in FY08.

The MdBC was formed and had its first Board of Directors meeting on July 20, 2006.

The MdBC will lay a fiber backbone in rural Maryland in an effort to allow last mile providers to affordably take high speed internet service to every home, business, and educational facility in rural Maryland.

Pat Mitchell is the Project Manager; Darcel Morris is the Executive Assistant.

The project:

Connect NASA Wallops Island to PAX River NAS via the Bay Bridge.

Connect Easton to Cecil County via Caroline County.

Connect Western Maryland.

Current

Fiber on the grounds of NASA Wallops Island has been completed.

Fiber is currently being laid between Wallops Island and Salisbury – 4 trenching crews are operating.

MdBC will have a groundbreaking ceremony at Salisbury University in May 2007.

MdBC has been approved to run fiber on both spans of the Bay Bridge, will be completed in May 2007.

Final stages of contract agreement between the MdBC and SHA are being completed.

Phase 2 of the project – Salisbury to the Bay Bridge has been approved by the MdBC Board of Directors, funding approval has not gone to the Coordination Board yet.

Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board

History

Reviews and approves the disbursement of funds to assist the establishment of broadband communication services in rural and underserved areas of the state.

Nine board members: Chairman or designee from each regional council, Secretary of DBED's designee, Secretary of Transportation's designee, Chief of the State Office of Information Technology, Chairman of the Rural Maryland Council. Gale Nashold is the MSRC representative

Current

Approved the funds for the Bay Bridge phase.

Agricultural Economic Development Specialist

History

The Agricultural Economic Development Specialist will be responsible for planning, marketing, and managing economic development strategies to attract, retain, and grow agricultural and resource-based businesses in Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties, as well as developing and implementing agriculture policies and programs that lead to the long-term economic viability of the industry in the Mid-Shore Region.

The study used to help justify the position was an American Farmland Trust study "Regional Economic Development Strategy for Resource-Based Industries

on Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore" prepared for the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy with funding from the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc. Worked with Brad Powers, Ag Extension Agents, and farm focus group in solidifying this concept.

Current

Rauch Foundation (\$12,000) and MAERDAF (\$24,000) grants are waiting for the MSRC to request them.

The MSRC staff is waiting for a phone call from USDA Rural Development that their program funds have been allocated to them. The RBEG is for \$66,900.

Selection criteria and process has been approved by the MSRC attorney:

Will run an advertisement for 10 days.

Selection committee: MSRC Chairman, MSRC Executive Director, Consultant Brad Powers, and the Ag Extension Agents for Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties.

Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

History

ESEC is a 501c3 corporation established in November 2004.

Established to encourage and stimulate small and mid-size business growth in Talbot, Dorchester, and Caroline counties.

Loan funds have been received from DBED and USDA Rural Development to start the Mid-Shore Business Development Fund:

MSRC oversees the \$100,000 DBED MEAF grant.

Companies who take loans also agree to monthly consultants from the 'Brain Capital':

Many companies are utilizing the 'Brain Capital' without asking for a loan.

\$135,000 worth of loans has been issued since the winter of 2006. Loans to date have been finalized with:

B&B Sport Aviation & Brooks Barrel retail division located in Dorchester County
Gibb Sails & Kids N Motion of Talbot County.

Current

Operational funding of \$4900 has been received to date from Rural Maryland Council MAERDAF, with another \$4900 due; funding has also been requested from Talbot, Caroline and Dorchester counties, TEDCO and EDA.

Three new businesses have applied for funding.

ESEC is beginning to set in motion angel and venture network for MidShore businesses as well as working on an entrepreneurship training program

MUST (Maryland Upper Shore Transit)

History

A state initiated effort five years ago to establish a coordination program between three providers (Delmarva Community Transit – DCT, Queen Anne's County Ride, and U-Star) of public transportation in five upper shore counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot).

Now the program consists of DCT and Queen Anne's County Ride.

With the help from the MTA the MUST program received a federal grant to establish a scheduling and asset allocation system using GPS positioning, it is

one of a few test programs for the nation. This system is currently in the final stages of implementation.

Current

Working with MTA and KFH Group to help them establish the Maryland State and Regional Transportation Coordination Plans.

MSRC submitted a Rural Community Base (RCB) grant request for FY08 in the amount of \$75,000 on 3/8/07.

Requests of \$5,000 from each county (Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot, Kent, and Queen Anne's) for transit dues FY08.

Producing the final copies of the promotional MUST video for distribution.

Working with two professional sales organizations to raise money for the MUST program and its providers by advertising on the buses and the schedule book.

Trying to establish a Spanish version of the schedule book.

Workforce Issues Task Force

History

During the late Spring/Early Summer of 2005 the Business, Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) of the Franklin P. Perdue School of Business at Salisbury University conducted an Opinion Leader Panel Survey on Workforce Issues in Maryland's Mid-Shore Region. Two major categories were covered: Dependent Care Issues and Work Ethic Issues.

February 2006 a Brainstorming meeting was conducted to list possible solutions.

Three subcommittees were formed:

Child Care Issues –

Fall/Winter of 2006 a poster and handout was designed to highlight the Chesapeake Child Care Resource Center and Maryland Child Care Resource & Referral Network; posters will be printed soon.

Foundations to Enter the Workforce –

“Statement of Work Ethic” document was drafted.

It was distributed over the past month with help for the Chambers of Commerce.

Conflict Management / Current Workplace Issues –

October 2006 a document entitled “HR Solutions that Work” was distributed among the Mid-Shore Region with help from the Chambers of Commerce; it highlighted two programs: Character Counts and Mid Shore Mediation.

Current

Mid Shore Mediation will be conducting a Conflict Management Training – session 1 on May 18 and session 2 on June 22, both sessions will be held at their office (the old Talbot Business Center) from 8:00am – 12:00pm, recommend sending two employees, to reinforce each other's skills. Class is capped at 20 participants.

Immigrant workforce / CASA study

History

CASA of Maryland, an immigrant (Latino) advocate organization located in Takoma Park made a presentation on the Mid-Shore about two years ago.

BEACON did a feasibility study for CASA that was completed in July 2006:

Study done for 9 counties of the Eastern Shore.

24 month build up.

\$300,000.

CASA was not ready to embark on this venture.

A committee was informally brought together to discuss the possibilities of helping businesses attract immigrant workforce.

Currently the Immigrant Workforce Committee had a Latino focus group meeting in January 2007, the committee has had successive meetings examining its focus and mission as it moves forward examining other organizations across the nation focused on the same subject.

New Business

Discuss date to host the Eastern Shore Regional Councils' Joint Meeting.

This year it is MSRC's turn to host the annual meeting discussion took place as to which month to host it in either November or December? Overwhelming consensus was to have the meeting in November.

A copy of the book a framework for Understanding Poverty was provided for all the MSRC members at this meeting. James Redman, Talbot County Elementary School Principal and certified trainer of "aha! Process" discussed in the book was present at this meeting to enlighten the group as to the books meaning and how it has been positively affecting people throughout the community.

Other matters - None

Member comments/requests - None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m. by unanimous consent.