

Article – Economic Development

§13-401.

In this subtitle, “Council” means the Rural Maryland Council.

§13-402.

There is a Rural Maryland Council.

§13-403.

The Council is a State rural development council that brings together members of the public and representatives of public sector entities and private sector organizations to address collaboratively problems and challenges facing rural communities in the State.

§13-404.

The Council is an independent unit in the Executive Branch of State government that is placed under the State Department of Agriculture for administrative and budgetary purposes.

§13-405.

(a) The membership of the Council is open to any resident of the State who has an interest in improving the quality of life in rural areas of the State and chooses to join the Council.

(b) The Council shall include:

(1) the Governor or the Governor’s designee;

(2) as determined under the bylaws of the Council:

(i) representatives from local, State, and federal agencies that serve rural interests; and

(ii) representatives from private sector organizations, including rural-based for-profit and not-for-profit organizations and rural client groups; and

(3) as nonvoting members:

(i) one member of the Senate of Maryland from each of the three rural regions of the State, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(ii) one member of the House of Delegates from each of the three rural regions of the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and

(iii) one member of the Senate of Maryland or the House of Delegates representing Harford County, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

§13-406.

(a) From among its members, the Council shall elect each year a chair and one or more vice chairs.

(b) The Council shall adopt bylaws for the conduct of its business.

§13-407.

The Council shall establish an Executive Board.

§13-408.

(a) The Executive Board shall include:

(1) the chair of the Council;

(2) the Governor or the Governor's designee;

(3) the Secretary or the Secretary's designee;

(4) the Secretary of Agriculture or the designee of the Secretary of Agriculture;

(5) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene or the designee of the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene;

(6) the Secretary of Housing and Community Development or the designee of the Secretary of Housing and Community Development;

(7) the Secretary of Natural Resources or the designee of the Secretary of Natural Resources;

- (8) the Director of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service or the Director's designee;
- (9) two representatives of the Maryland Municipal League, selected from rural regions of the State;
- (10) two representatives of the Maryland Association of Counties, selected from rural regions of the State;
- (11) one representative of each of the rural regional planning and development councils in the State;
- (12) one representative of each of the resource, conservation, and development councils in the State;
- (13) one or more representatives of units of the federal government;
- (14) one representative from Garrett County, Allegany County, or Washington County;
- (15) one representative from Carroll County or Frederick County;
- (16) one representative from Calvert County, Charles County, or St. Mary's County;
- (17) one representative from Cecil County or Harford County;
- (18) one representative from Dorchester County, Somerset County, Wicomico County, or Worcester County;
- (19) one representative of the private for-profit sector;
- (20) one representative of the not-for-profit sector;
- (21) no more than six representatives of statewide not-for-profit organizations with a rural focus;
- (22) two at-large members, selected by the membership of the Council; and
- (23) as nonvoting members, the senators and delegates appointed to the Council under § 13-405(b)(3) of this subtitle.

(b) Members of the Executive Board shall be selected and serve in accordance with the bylaws of the Council.

(c) The Council may expand the membership of the Executive Board through the bylaws of the Council.

(d) The chair of the Council is the chair of the Executive Board.

§13-409.

After a consensus of opinion has emerged, the Executive Board shall make recommendations on programmatic or regulatory matters of concern to rural communities.

§13-410.

With the consent of the Executive Board, the chair may establish subcommittees or working committees consisting of members of the Council and interested parties to address or study specific issues.

§13-411.

(a) The Council shall employ an Executive Director.

(b) The Executive Director:

(1) is responsible for the daily operations of the Council; and

(2) shall help develop policy recommendations for consideration by the Council or the Executive Board.

(c) The Executive Director serves at the pleasure of the Executive Board.

§13-412.

(a) The State Department of Agriculture shall provide the Council with necessary staff support and resources, including office space.

(b) Each unit in the Executive Branch of State government shall participate in the deliberations of the Council and work with the Council on matters relating to the unit.

(c) The Attorney General is the legal advisor to the Council.

§13-413.

The Council is exempt from:

(1) Division I of the State Personnel and Pensions Article;

(2) Division II of the State Finance and Procurement Article, except as otherwise provided in § 11-203(b) of the State Finance and Procurement Article; and

(3) Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State Government Article.

§13-414.

(a) The Governor shall include in the budget of the State Department of Agriculture funding for the Council.

(b) The Secretary of Agriculture shall include without revision the budget request of the Council in the budget request of the State Department of Agriculture that is provided to the Department of Budget and Management.

§13-415.

(a) The Council may undertake any activity that addresses issues and concerns of rural areas of the State as long as the activity is not inconsistent with provisions of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 regarding the National Rural Development Partnership and state rural development councils, 7 U.S.C. § 2008m.

(b) The Council may:

(1) maintain a principal office at a location in the central region of the State that is accessible to the rural public;

(2) employ, as regular employees or as independent contractors, staff that the Council considers necessary in accordance with the Council budget;

(3) enter into contracts;

(4) accept grants and other assistance from the federal government, other units of State government, local governments, or a private source; and

(5) do all things necessary or convenient to carry out its purpose.

§13-416.

The Council shall publish and submit an annual report of its activities to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly.