

# BYLAWS OF THE RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL

## ARTICLE I

### Name, Authority, Location

Section 1.1 **Name** – The name of this organization shall be the Rural Maryland Council, herein referred to as “Council”.

Section 1.2 **Authority** – The Council is organized pursuant to Article – Economic Development, Section 13-401, of the *Annotated Code of Maryland*. The Council is a state rural development Council and an independent state agency. The Council may undertake any activity that addresses issues and concerns of the citizens of rural Maryland as long as the activity is not inconsistent with the provisions of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, Section 6021) regarding the National Rural Development Partnership and State Rural Development Councils.

Section 1.3 **Location** – The offices of the Council shall be located in the Central Maryland area at the site designated by the Executive Board. Office expenses shall be paid for with funds that are donated or provided in the budget.

## ARTICLE II

### Mission

The mission of the Council is to serve as a partnership of federal, state and local government, together with the private sector, to improve the quality of life of all citizens of rural Maryland. This mission is accomplished by:

- 1) Providing a neutral sounding board for the development of state and federal policy affecting rural areas and the implementation of state and federal programs;
- 2) Building a collaborative relationship with federal, state, county and municipal governments, and private for-profit and nonprofit organizations, to better serve the public in rural areas of Maryland;
- 3) Considering intergovernmental issues and opportunities shared by the rural regions of the state and enhancing local institutional capacity to consider those needs and priorities;
- 4) Conducting policy research and analysis, and sharing ideas and information on innovative techniques for developing leadership;
- 5) Promoting regional cooperation in order to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of public services in rural areas;
- 6) Assisting rural communities in the development of a strategic vision which can mobilize available resources, restore commitment, and lay a foundation for future prosperity;
- 7) Protecting and enhancing the natural resources and cultural heritage of rural Maryland; and
- 8) Advocating the priorities and needs of Maryland’s rural communities where a consensus of opinion has been reached.

As a collaborative partnership, the Council shall be established and operated in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner. Policy-makers and managers from stakeholding agencies and organizations at all levels of government and the private sector are valued participants in Council activities. Where practical, the decision-making undertaken by the Council will ordinarily be made by reaching consensus.

### **ARTICLE III** **Members**

Section 3.1 **Membership** – Membership in the Council is open to any citizen of Maryland who subscribes to the mission of the Council, including:

- a) The Governor or the Governor's designee;
- b) The members of the General Assembly representing rural areas of the State (as ex officio, non-voting members);
- c) Elected and appointed county government officials from rural areas of the State;
- d) Elected and appointed municipal government officials from rural areas of the State;
- e) Representatives from State and federal agencies that service rural areas;
- f) Representatives from the private sector including rural-based for-profit and nonprofit organizations and rural client groups; and
- g) Representatives from each of the following regional councils:
  - 1) The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland;
  - 2) The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland;
  - 3) The Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland;
  - 4) The Mid Shore Regional Council;
  - 5) The Upper Shore Regional Council; and

Section 3.2 **Membership Application** – Any person meeting the criteria listed in Section 3.1 may apply for membership in the Council according to the procedure established by the Executive Board.

Section 3.3 **Other Membership Categories** – The Council may authorize additional categories of membership, including honorary membership, based on a process approved by the Executive Board.

### **ARTICLE IV** **Officers**

Section 4.1 **Chairperson** – The members of the Council shall annually elect one of the voting members to serve as Council Chairperson. In order to qualify for the position of Chairperson, a member must have served for at least one year as a member of the Executive Board. The Chairperson of the Council shall preside at membership and Executive Board meetings, and shall assume other duties as may be directed by the membership or Executive Board. In addition, the Chairperson, in consultation with the Executive Director, shall prepare the agendas for Council membership and Executive Board meetings.

Section 4.2 **Additional Officers** – In addition to the Chairperson, the officers of the Council shall be a First Vice-chairperson, and a Second Vice-chairperson, who shall be annually elected by the membership and assigned duties by the Executive Board.

## **ARTICLE V Membership Meetings**

Section 5.1 **Meetings** -- The general membership of the Council shall meet at a time and place designated by the Chairperson or by a majority of the Executive Board. Adequate advance notice of the membership meetings shall be given to Council members.

Section 5.2 **Annual Meetings** – The last scheduled membership meeting of the Council held in each calendar year shall constitute the annual meeting of the Council. The officers and certain voting members of the Executive Board shall be elected and other appropriate business conducted at the annual meeting.

Section 5.3 **Quorum** – Fifteen or more members present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business by the Council. A simple majority of those present and voting shall decide any questions put to a vote.

## **ARTICLE VI Executive Board**

### **Section 6.1 Classes of membership; members**

- a) **Elected Members** – The general membership of the Council shall elect ten voting members of the Executive Board for a one-year term at the annual meeting to serve in the following representative capacities:
- 1) One representative from among the private sector nonprofit organization members of the Council;
  - 2) One representative from among the private sector for-profit organization members of the Council;
  - 3) One representative of District One (Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties);
  - 4) One representative of District Two (Frederick, Carroll and Harford Counties);
  - 5) One representative of District Three (Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's Counties);
  - 6) One representative of District Four (Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties);
  - 7) One representative of District Five (Caroline, Dorchester and Talbot Counties);
  - 8) One representative of District Six (Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties);
  - 9) One representative of District Seven (from the rural areas of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties); and
  - 10) One representative from the state at-large.

Caucuses – Council members residing in the respective districts as defined in Section 6.1 may meet informally to nominate persons to serve as district representatives. Similarly, members of for-profit or nonprofit organizations may meet informally to nominate persons to represent for-profit or nonprofit organizations on the Executive Board. Caucus nominations are advisory and do not bind the Council membership.

- b) **Designated Local Government Associations** – The following local government associations may designate two individuals each from rural areas to serve a two-year term on the Executive Board as voting members beginning January 1 of odd-numbered years:
  - 1) The Maryland Municipal League; and
  - 2) The Maryland Association of Counties.
  
- c) **Other Designated Stakeholder Associations** – The following organizations may designate one individual each from rural areas to serve a two-year term on the Executive Board as voting members beginning January 1 of even-numbered years
  - 1) The Maryland Rural Health Association;
  - 2) The Maryland Farm Bureau;
  - 3) The Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators;
  - 4) Maryland Main Streets; and
  - 5) The MarylandCommunity Action Partnership.
  
- d) **Governor, Governor’s Cabinet, Cooperative Extension Service, Regional Council, and Resource Conservation and Development Council Representatives** – **The following individuals shall be voting members of the Executive Board:**
  - 1) The Governor or the Governor's designee;
  - 2) The Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary’s Designee;
  - 3) The Secretary of Commerce or the Secretary’s Designee;
  - 4) The Secretary Housing and Community Development or the Secretary’s Designee;
  - 5) The Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene or the Secretary’s Designee;
  - 6) The Secretary of Natural Resources or the Secretary’s Designee;
  - 7) The Director of the University of Maryland Extension or the Director’s designee;
  - 8) The Executive Director of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland or the Executive Director's designee;
  - 9) The Coordinator of the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council or the Coordinator’s designee;
  - 10) The Executive Director of the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland or the Executive Director's designee;
  - 11) The Coordinator of the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council or the Coordinator’s designee;
  - 12) The Executive Director of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland or the Executive Director’s Designee;

- 13) The Executive Director of the Mid Shore Regional Council or the Executive Director's designee;
  - 14) The Executive Director of the Upper Shore Regional Council or the Executive Director's Designee; and
  - 15) The Coordinator of the Eastern Shore Resource Conservation and Development Council or the Coordinator's designee.
- e) **Members Selected by the Council**– The following shall serve as members as may be determined by the Council:
- 1) Three or more representatives of federal government agencies including the Maryland State Director for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;
  - 2) a representative of the FORVM For Rural Maryland Foundation or designee; and
  - 3) One or two additional persons that bring significant experience or skills to the work of the Council.
- f) **Nonvoting Ex-Officio Members** -- The following shall be non-voting members of the Executive Board:
- 1) Three members of the Senate of Maryland representing rural areas appointed by the President;
  - 2) Three members of the House of Delegates representing rural areas appointed by the Speaker;
  - 3) One member of the Senate of Maryland or House of Delegates representing Harford County;

Section 6.2 **Terms of Office** – The term for Executive Board members and for each officer elected or appointed shall be for one year commencing on January 1, unless otherwise specified.

Section 6.3 **Vacancies** – Any vacancy occurring in an office of the Council or Executive Board shall be filled by an appointment of the Executive Board. An Executive Board member or an officer elected or appointed to fill a vacancy shall take office immediately and serve for the unexpired term of the predecessor in office.

Section 6.4 **Removal from Office** – Any member of the Executive Board who commits a felony or serious transgression, who acts in a disruptive or disorderly fashion, or who has unexcused absences from two consecutive meetings of the Board, shall be deemed to have resigned his/her position as a member of the Executive Board, unless the Chairperson finds that there is a compelling reason as to why such a person should not be removed from office.

Section 6.5 **Nominating Committee** – The Chairman may designate Board members to serve on a nominating committee as deemed necessary.

Section 6.6 **Meetings** -- The Executive Board shall meet at least quarterly. The Executive Board may also meet upon call by the Chairperson or upon request of a majority of the Executive

Board, at a time and place which shall be designated, with adequate notice given to Board members prior to the meeting.

Section 6.7 **Minutes** – Minutes of Executive Board meetings shall be recorded and kept on file in the Council offices. Minutes of Executive Board meetings shall be provided to individual Council members upon request.

Section 6.8 **Quorum** – A majority of the members of the Executive Board present at a meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business. A simple majority of those present and voting shall decide any questions put to a vote.

Section 6.9 **Substitute Representatives** – Executive Board members may designate persons to represent them at Executive Board meetings. Such persons may not vote and may not count for purposes of establishing a quorum.

Section 6.10 **Expenses** – The members of the Executive Board may not receive any compensation for their services. The members may be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, in accordance with the standard travel regulations, and as provided in the budget.

Section 6.11 **Authority of the Executive Board** – The Executive Board shall generally oversee and direct the affairs of the Council, and is authorized to act for the Council on items which require attention between the general membership meetings of the Council. The Fiscal Year of the Council shall be July 1 through June 30.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Executive Director**

Section 7.1 **Chief Staff Officer** – An Executive Director shall be hired by the Council to serve as the chief staff officer of the Council. The Executive Director shall be compensated for his/her services as provided for in the budget. The Executive Director shall serve at the pleasure of the Executive Board, subject to applicable state and federal regulations and procedures.

Section 7.2 **Duties** – The Executive Director shall perform any and all duties and assume all such responsibilities of office as may be directed by the Executive Board. The Executive Director shall carry out the directives of the Board and shall be responsible to the Board for conducting the day-to-day affairs of the Council. The Executive Director shall provide leadership in identifying and resolving issues or problems facing citizens living in rural areas and shall assist in the development of policy recommendations for consideration by the Council membership and Executive Board.

Section 7.3 **Staff Support** – Provision of secretarial and other staff support shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director as provided for in the budget.

**ARTICLE VIII**  
**Committees**

Section 8.1 **Standing committees**

- a) **Executive Committee** – The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chairperson, the First Vice-chairperson, the Second Vice-chairperson, the Immediate Past Chairperson of the Executive Board, Standing Committee Chairpersons and other Executive Board members as determined by the Executive Board not to exceed nine in number. The President of the Rural Maryland Foundation shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall have any duties that may be assigned to it by the Executive Board.
  
- b) **Planning and Development Committee** – The Planning and Development Committee shall consist of several Council members appointed by the Chairperson with the approval of the Executive Board. The Planning and Development Committee shall periodically ascertain the strategic needs of the Council and shall identify the financial and other resources that may be needed to effectively sustain the operations of the Council. Any recommendations of the committee shall be forwarded to the Executive Board for approval.
  
- c) **Legislative Committee** – The members of the Executive Committee shall serve as the voting members of the Legislative Committee. The Legislative Committee may consist of additional nonvoting members appointed by the Executive Board from among the members of the Executive Board. The Legislative Committee may study and offer recommendations on state legislative measures that potentially have a broad and substantial impact on rural Maryland, and where a rural consensus on appropriate courses of action has emerged.
  - 1. **Legislative Positions** – The Legislative Committee and the Executive Board may take formal positions of support or opposition on a limited number of bills pending before the General Assembly each year, provided that such bills shall have a regional or statewide rural impact. The Council may not take a position on any piece of local legislation. Moreover, the Council may not take a formal position on a bill that would be directly contrary to the stated position of the Governor. In addition, the Council may only advocate on issues with members of the United States Congress pursuant to provisions of federal law.
  
  - 2. **Legislative Committee Recommendations** – The Committee shall report its recommendations for legislative action to the Executive Board for approval. In the event that the committee's report to the Executive Board concerning legislative recommendations would not be timely, the Executive Director may use his/her discretion in offering the Council's position on a bill at a public hearing. In order to maintain the Council's credibility, once a position of the Council on a bill is announced publicly, it cannot be reversed by the Executive Board except under extraordinary circumstances. In addition, the Executive

Director may alter a position of the Council in a manner consistent with Council policies if a determination is made that a change in position would be in the best interests of the Council, and a meeting of the Executive Board or Legislative Committee cannot be held for timely consideration of the change.

- d) **Health Care Committee** – The Health Care Committee shall consist of members appointed by the Chairperson with approval of the Executive Board. The Committee shall identify specific challenges in the health arena and make recommendations to the Executive Board for approval.

## Section 8.2 **Special Committees and Task Forces**

- a) **Issue Task Forces** – The Executive Board may establish one or more task forces to study and work towards effective resolution of serious issues or problems facing rural Maryland. It is anticipated that the members of these task forces would come from both within and outside the Council's membership. The Chairperson and the Executive Director shall invite persons to serve on the Council's task forces in a manner that is consistent with these Bylaws. The Executive Director shall exercise broad latitude in organizing and scheduling the work of the task forces.
- b) **Ad Hoc Committees** – The Chairperson of the Council, with the consent of the Executive Board, may create special committees as necessary from among the members to address and study specific concerns.

## Section 8.3 **Miscellaneous Provisions**

- a) **Time and Place of Committee Meetings** – The time and place of committee meetings shall be determined by the respective committee chairperson, or by the committee of the whole.
- b) **Committee Member Removal** – Any member of a committee who commits a felony or serious transgression, who acts in a disruptive or disorderly fashion, or who has unexcused absences from two consecutive meetings in any given year, shall be deemed to have resigned his/her position as a member of the committee, unless the Council Chairperson finds that there is a compelling reason as to why such a person should not be removed from the membership on the committee.

## **ARTICLE IX Parliamentary Authority**

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the Council may adopt.



**ARTICLE X**  
**Amendments**

These bylaws can be amended by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any meeting of the Council, whether regular or special, provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the membership at least ten days prior to the date of the meeting at which the vote is to be taken. In presenting any proposed amendment to the Council membership for action, the Executive Board shall prepare a brief assessment of the effect of the proposed amendment on the Council's mission, structure or operations.