

RMC Legislative Committee  
September 4, 2014  
Wye Research and Education Center  
124 Wye Narrows Drive, Queenstown  
Meeting Minutes

Participants:

Josh Hastings, Chair, Legislative Committee	Mike Pennington, TCCLES
Jon Andes, Eastern Shore Education Consortium	Lenny Pfeffer
Bill Barnes, Eastern Shore Manufacturing Co	Rick Pollitt, Co Ex Wicomico Co
Robert Buckey	Linda Prochaska, Sen. Mikulski
Betty Carlson-Jameson	Leah Reynolds
Kathleen Deoudes	Donna Sasscer
Addie Eckardt	Patrice Stanley
Sheila Greenwood	Martha Sparks
Roxanne Hale	Perry Stutman
John Hartline	Matt Teffeau
Josh Hastings	Ben Tilghman
Penelope Keating	John Venditta
Joanna Kille, MDA	Angela Visitainer, Caroline Co Econ Dev
Kim Kratovil, Sen. Cardin	Sara Visitainer
Dick Lahn	Ed Vitalos, ESRGC
Doris Mason, Upper Shore Regional Council	Scott Warner, MidShore Regional Council
Erroll Mattox	
William McGowan	
John McQuaid	RMC Staff:
Daniel Medinger	Charlotte Davis, Executive Director
Nancy Nunn, Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology	Kathy Vernacchio, Administrative and Communications Assistant
Temi Oshiyoye, State Office of Rural Health	

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:20pm.

Chair Hastings welcomed participants and introduced the elected officials: Delegate Addie Eckhardt, Wicomico County Rick Pollitt, Perry Stutman, Town of Queenstown, and Kim Kratovil representing Senator Cardin.

The minutes from the last meeting held on June 24, 2014 were reviewed. Mr. Pennington moved to adopt the minutes; Ms. Mason seconded; the minutes were approved.

Chair Hastings reviewed the 2014 Legislative Priorities and gave a brief update on efforts to fund the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. There were conversations at the Maryland Association of Counties convention in August. At the August 20<sup>th</sup> RMC Executive Board meeting, the Democratic Lt. Gov. candidate mentioned RMPIF during his speech. Delegate Eckardt suggested pursuing private funding for RMPIF such as InvestMaryland model of prepaid tax credits or whether private entities could help fund the program

The guest speaker was Ann Jones with Partners for Program Open Space. Partners for Program Open Space are a group of 100 organizations that advocate for full funding of Program Open Space which includes the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. 27% of Maryland's land has been developed; 873,000 acres were lost between 1950 and 1970.

Funding for POS is through ½% tax on real estate transactions. Currently there are over \$178 million of projects waiting to be funded. 11 million people visit the state's parks resulting in a \$650 million economic impact annually. Locally, 45,000 acres are local parks. The current need is \$1.7 Billion for development and redevelopment.

MALPF has secured 286,000 acres in easements and protected 2,100 farms. Their current need is 170 farms in line for preservation. Agriculture contributes \$8.25 Billion annually to the economy. Rural Legacy has preserved 77,000 acres with a current need over \$100 million a year. Over \$1 billion of POS funds have gone to the General Fund.

Recently changes to POS:

- Proposed cap on total funding. May come up again in the future
- Proposal to permanently divert funding
- Promises to pay back diverted funding haven't been kept

Partners for POS want to preserve and maintain the best of Maryland's parks and farmland. We should use the dedicated transfer tax for its intended purpose and return POS to full cash funding. The State should repay POS revenues that were diverted.

There was then discussion about issues to consider for the 2015 Legislative Priorities. The renewable portfolio standard to include thermal energy and change the distribution of individual credits was mentioned. The Telecommunications Tax Reform legislation to fund rural broadband expansion was mentioned. Under transportation, the highway user revenues that were to be distributed to local jurisdictions but were kept by the State remains a priority. There is a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November that would create a lockbox on gas tax revenues. Other issues discussed included: telemedicine, the loan repayment program and the health care exchange/Medicaid eligibility. MDA is watching for reintroduction of the chicken tax bill. Wildlife and, in particular, deer management is an issue for farmers.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 pm

Next meeting: December 4, 2014 Noon to 2:00 pm location TBD