

Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) Executive Board

August 20, 2014 – 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Comptroller's Assembly Room

Office of the Comptroller, 80 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Participants:

Peggy Alpert
Steven Arentz
Charles Bailey
William Barnes
Kathy Beisner
Tammy Black
Richard C. Blair
R. Kevin Brooks
Stewart Bruce
Hannah Byron
Mollie Byron
Betty Carlson-Jameson
Laura Carr
Michelle Clark
Shirley Collier
Steven Darcey
Michael Dugan
Addie Eckardt
Keith Gordon
Lawrence Graham
Santo Grande
Roxanne Hale
Craig Hartsock
Josh Hastings
Rick Hemphill
Emily Hollis
Michael Jackson
Tom Jarboe
Mae Johnson
Ann Jones
Tony Knotts
Kimberly Kratovil
Wilbur Levensgood

Loretta Lodge
Denise Lovelady
Sharan Marshall
Doris Mason
Erroll Mattox
Margaret McGinty
Steve McHenry
Thomas McLoughlin
Sabrina McNeal
Mary O'Keeffe
Temi Oshiyoye
Gail Owings
Michael Pennington
Rick Pollitt
Linda Prochaska
Donna Sasscer
Al Silverstein
Angela Spencer
Patrice Stanley
Mitchelle Stephenson
Cindy Stone
Perry Stutman
Matt Tefteau
Michael Thielke
Sara Visintainer
Scott Warner
Karl Weber
Emily Wilson

RMC Staff:
Charlotte Davis
Kathleen Vernacchio

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Chairman Warner called the meeting to order at approximately 11:59 a.m.

Mike Pennington, Past Chair for the Rural Maryland Council, introduced our first guest speaker, Ken Ulman, County Executive of Howard County.

Guest Speaker Ken Ulman (Howard County Executive and Democratic Candidate for Lieutenant Governor)

County Executive Ulman shared his thoughts on governing effectively and what his competitive business policies have done to contribute to Howard County's success. He shared the fact that both he and Lieutenant Governor Brown would focus on two areas: a competitive business climate and an intergovernmental council that will involve all the municipalities and counties in Maryland. The number one strategic goal will be to create the most competitive business climate of any state in the nation. Every decision made would be filtered through that discussion. He acknowledged there is a different strategy that works for Garrett County than the strategy that works for Southern Maryland, Crisfield, or the Lower Shore, but felt their administration can support all of our strategies together – manufacturing, broadband, agriculture, and infrastructure. County Executive Ulman suggested the Brown/Ulman administration would work with the regional councils and state organizations to come up with collaborative strategies that may allow for inclusion of rural investment funds.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Warner reviewed the Executive Board Meeting Minutes of March 28 and asked if there were any changes or corrections to those minutes. As there was no comment from the group, Mr. Warner asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Silverstein motioned to accept; the motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Rural Maryland Foundation

Chairman Warner introduced Kevin Brooks who has been a tremendous supporter of both the Council and the Foundation. Mr. Brooks presented on behalf of Dan Rider, President of the Foundation. Mr. Brooks recognized the members of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. He told the group the Foundation has been on a hiatus, but with a re-energized Board of Trustees, there is an exciting future ahead. The Trustees have been busy reviewing the By Laws, the structure, and updating our web presence putting the Foundation in a position for future growth. He told the group the financial status of the Foundation is just under \$88,000.00. We are current with all our filings, and we look forward to presenting the new and improved Foundation at the annual meeting November 13.

Committee Reports

Financial

Charlotte Davis told the membership we ended fiscal year 2014, June 30, 2014, with \$198,572 in expenditures and \$303,356 in revenue. We were able to start fiscal year 2015 with \$262,585 of that \$220,000 is available and we need authorization to spend the carryover. We have a projected budget of \$233,635. Delegate Eckardt moved to accept the financials as presented, the motion was seconded and the financials were unanimously approved.

Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF)

Sharan Marshall, Chair of the MAERDAF Grant Review Board, told the group the Fund is a victim of its own success. This year we had 54 applicants seeking over \$1 million in funding. The MAERDAF Fund has \$167,000 to award. We hope to finish the review process and announce the recipients on September 2.

Youth Engagement Project

Doris Mason presented a synopsis of the Youth Engagement Project. The Upper Shore Regional Council with the leadership of the Rural Maryland Council is collaborating with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to pilot this survey. The Upper Shore was an ideal pilot as youth retention and attraction is part of the Upper Shore Regional Council's strategic plan. With the help of the Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's County school systems, we intend to survey students in grades six through twelve electronically. We will engage community partners who work with youth and conduct youth focus groups. We will then bring adults and youth together in town hall meetings. We will then analyze the data and use it as a tool to create steps to retain youth in the region or at least if they leave to attract them back to the region. Our timeline is September through December.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)

Mike Pennington reminded the group that through the efforts of Charlotte Davis and some other folks, we were able to get legislation through Session that extended the life of the Fund through 2030. Mr. Pennington drew a connection between the purpose of RMPIF and the fact that MAERDAF had over \$1 million in requests. If we would be able to get RMPIF in the budget, we would be able to fund more MAERDAF applications. Mr. Pennington invited the members to provide suggestions as to how the RMC might proceed through the next legislative session to work with the legislators and the administration to get funding for RMPIF.

Legislative Committee

Josh Hastings, Chair of the Legislative Committee, told members we had a large turnout, approximately 60 people, at the June 26 meeting; participants included U.S. Senator representatives as well as county

representatives. Mr. Greg Farley of Chesapeake College CLEEN Center was the featured guest speaker. He gave a good overview on renewable energy. There was some discussion about poultry litter and gasification as well. The discussion then turned to ideas for 2015 legislative priorities. We are looking for committee members to be active in the 2015 Legislative Session. The next meeting will be September 4 at Wye Research and Education Center in Queenstown.

Health Care Committee

Tom McLoughlin, Chair of the Health Care Committee, stated we are very pleased that the Governor resumed the Telemedicine Task Force and we are anxiously awaiting that report. We are diligently seeking information and items for our Committee. We believe in a group approach and would like to make sure our efforts are consistent with our mission.

Joint Planning and Development Committee

Mike Thielke, Chairman for the Joint Planning and Development Committee, said Charlotte Davis recruited him to reconstitute the Committee. Six individuals met on July 31 for the first meeting. Committee members agreed to meet for the next six months every six weeks. Meetings will be in Easton, Princess Anne, and Annapolis. We welcome anyone who would like to participate. Mr. Thielke was recruited to chair the Committee and was asked to serve on the Foundation Board of Trustees so it made sense that the Committee be a joint committee as both organizations should be moving in the same direction and our priorities coordinated. We would like the Foundation to gain capacity at the grassroots level. Any priorities established for the organizations must coincide with the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. Broadband/internet connectivity, agriculture, youth and energy are priorities being considered. The Committee will vet these further and will have more to report at the RMC Annual Meeting on November 13.

Governors Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture (GICA)

Erroll Mattox, RMC Commission Representative, gave a presentation at the last meeting. The purpose of the presentation was to educate realtors on selling farmland. Many little things happen when you sell a farm. MDE is trying to get counties to have continuity across the counties on stronger management issues that exist. They are offering some models for ag buildings in particular so you do not have to do the engineering; this would curtail expense. The next meeting is in October. Mr. Mattox asked rural farms be on the agenda, particularly value-added agriculture. If anyone has anything they want brought forward to the Commission, contact Charlotte Davis she will know how to get in touch with Mr. Mattox.

Chairman Warner introduced keynote speaker Peter Franchot

Keynote Speaker Peter Franchot (Comptroller for the State of Maryland)

Comptroller Franchot recognized our Chairman Scott Warner as an outstanding Marylander. He also recognized U.S. Congressional, State and County representatives in the audience.

Comptroller Franchot said there were two figures, 2.2 and 3.7, he would like members to take away from the presentation. Two point two is the number of business days that it took his agency this year to put \$2 billion in tax refunds in constituents' bank accounts. He recognized the hard work of the people in his organization and mentioned no other comptroller's office in the country is near that turnaround time.

\$3.7 billion is the number of tax dollars that have traditionally been uncollectable due to difficulty in identifying the wealthy individuals that owe that money. Previous Comptrollers had given up on collecting these monies, but due to advances in technology, Comptroller Franchot's office has been able to collect these funds.

Comptroller Franchot spoke of the importance of fighting for Maryland – all of Maryland. The Comptroller's Office has partnered successfully on a number of initiatives like successfully opposing the repeal of the coal mine tax credit that is so important to Western Maryland families; successfully getting government out of the liquor business in Worcester County; fighting to dispel outdated views on the poultry industry that supports much of the shore's economy, and starting school after Labor Day.

Comptroller Franchot supports school starting after Labor Day for a number of reasons. His office will be delivering 10,000 signatures to the new Governor and General Assembly to ask for school to start after Labor Day. It is not just for Maryland tourism or the 4-H children who work so hard, but have to make a choice whether to miss class or drop out of competition at the state fair. More than \$77 million in new economic activity would be generated in an economy that saw zero percent growth in fiscal year 2013. The main reason is so that families would have that precious time to spend together.

Comptroller Franchot sees government as a junior partner working with the private sector in creating employment and wage growth.

First Vice Chair Doris Mason introduced guest speaker Larry Hogan

Guest Speaker Larry Hogan (Republican Candidate for Governor)

Larry Hogan said rural Maryland would have an open door to his administration. Rural Maryland will have a seat at the table. He said his administration would be focused on the environment. The Hogan/Rutherford administration would work with the Clean Chesapeake Coalition to address the sediment in the Chesapeake Bay. He outlined commitment his administration would make to working with all the counties in Maryland to create business and job opportunities, return Highway User Revenues to the counties, and reduce taxes.

Doris Mason introduced Stewart Bruce, GIS Program Coordinator, Washington College.

Upper Shore Harvest Directory

Stewart Bruce, GIS Program Coordinator at Washington College, spoke about the creation of the Upper Shore Harvest Directory. He thanked the Rural Maryland Council for providing the major funding through the MAERDAF Grant to support this project. Mr. Bruce said his program employs approximately 5% of the student body working on projects.

Washington College works on a number of projects including crime mapping and analysis through Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, and the Maryland Highway Safety Office. Additionally, they just completed a land use/land cover mapping of the Choptank River Watershed in collaboration with the Chesapeake Conservancy and NOAA.

In partnership with Washington College, the Upper Shore Regional Council maintains the Upper Shore Harvest Directory to connect you with local farms and agribusinesses. The Harvest Directory includes farmer's markets, bakeries, stables, charter services and more. Mr. Bruce demonstrated the features of the online Upper Shore Harvest Directory showing how you can search by business name or products; you can also find a market or browse the map. Interested businesses can join the directory by either completing an application and mailing it in, or they can go to the website and complete the online form. Plans include expanding the Directory throughout the Eastern Shore and perhaps to the other side of the Bay.

Mr. Bruce opened the floor to questions. An individual from the Department of Business and Economic Development expressed interest in the application. Other individuals asked about cost. Mr. Bruce said the Upper Shore and Washington College were trying to keep the program free to businesses and consumers.

Scott Warner introduced Energetics Technology Center presenters Shirley Collier and Keith Gordon.

Energetic Technology Center -Tech Fire

Keith Gordon, Technologist and Systems Engineer for Energetics Technology Center. Energetics is a nonprofit technology center that works with innovated research and development with most of the Federal labs, the Office of Naval Research and DARPA. Tech Fire is a collaborative effort between Energetics and Tech Growth funded through a MAERDAF Grant. This study was mainly to look at the intersection of technology, entrepreneurship and rural Maryland. Mr. Gordon introduced his colleague Shirley Collier of Tech Growth. Ms. Collier is a nationally known speaker, an author, a philanthropist, and involved in technology transfer for the past 30 years.

Ms. Collier thanked the RMC for their funding. She told the group the focus of the study was to look at technologies from USDA laboratories; technologies that could potentially be licensed and would provide alternative farming options for farmers. Tech Growth wanted the study to strengthen the economic relationships among the agricultural community in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties.

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The process was to have discussions with individuals interested in the potential of this technology transfer. Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission members Christine Bergmark and Greg Bowen; University of Maryland Extension Service, Dan Kugler and Dr. Stephen Wright; Ginger Myers of Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center, and Mary Ellen Setting and Mark Powell at Maryland Department of Agriculture were all very supportive.

The study found there is not enough critical mass in Southern Maryland to sustain an agricultural technology transfer program. However, in moving the discussion statewide, they found there is potential at the State level. The findings indicate the State could sustain an agricultural based technology transfer program. Also, there is a substantial need for innovation among producers; however, the knowledge of and utilization of Federally funded agricultural research is low. Neither TEDCO nor DBED have Ag based economic development programs based on research or technology transfer.

The study identified alternative crops for technology transfer through the USDA; these include catnip, lavender, purple potatoes, mushrooms, rye, hops, and medicinals. With regard to hops, the study discovered there is a growing industry in micro-brewing and micro-distilling in Maryland. These industries are looking for cultivars that will make their product slightly different than the competition. Additionally, we should consider working with NIH to see if there is a potential for synergy with regarding to developing a market for medicinal. The next step would be to develop a web-based tool to make finding these technologies easier.

Keith Gordon summarized by saying rural Maryland has a connection with Federal labs. There are 244 patents available to be established by entrepreneurs. Maryland could export innovation to other states.

Nominating Committee

Mike Pennington told members we will be having our annual meeting in November. If you know anyone who might be interested in being on our Board, please contact Charlotte Davis.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.