

Minutes

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

November 13, 2014, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

President's Conference Center East

Miller Senate Building,

Participants:

Jon Andes
Sandy Arnette
Joseph Askew
A. Adar Ayira
Bill Barnes
Kathy Beisner
Wendell Beitzel
Tabb Bishop
Richard C. Blair
Ummu Bradley Thomas
Kevin Brooks
Annette Brown
Elliott Campbell
Michelle Clark
Steven Darcey
Addie Eckardt
Laura Ford
Kenrick Gordon
John Hartline
Josh Hastings
Ron Hawkins
Rick Hemphill
Keith Holmes
Michael Jackson
Toni Jarboe-Duley
Mae Johnson
Ann Jones
Ken Korando
Kim Kratovil
Dena Leibman
Doris Mason
Erroll Mattox

William McGowan
Steve McHenry
Tom McLoughlin
Daniel Medinger
Gloria Occhipinti
Mary O'Keeffe
Mike Pennington
Bruce Perrygo
Linda Prochaska
Odette Ramos
Tony Randall
Art Reeside
Joanne Richart-Young
Daniel Rider
Thomas Rider
Dorotheann Sadusky
Jack Shaw
Martha Sparks
Angela Spencer
Patrice Stanley
Lori Stone
Matt Teffeau
Mike Thielke
John Turgeon
William Turner
Drew Van Dopp
Scott Warner
Cathy Wolfson
RMC Staff:
Charlotte Davis, Executive Director
Kathy Vernacchio, Administrative and
Communications Assistant

Chairman Warner called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30 pm.

Welcome

Scott Warner welcomed the participants and thanked Senator James Mathias for sponsoring room for the Rural Maryland Council (RMC). He then introduced Dorotheann Sadusky, Chief of Staff to Senator Mathias. Ms. Sadusky welcomed everyone on behalf of Senator Mathias and said the Senator could not be at the meeting because he was presenting an award to Rick Shockley at the Maryland Travel and Tourism Convention in Ocean City.

Mr. Warner then asked Doris Mason, First Vice-Chair, to introduce the sponsor and guest speaker for our meeting, Mr. Tabb Bishop, Vice President of State Government Affairs for Verizon in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Guest Speaker: Tabb Bishop of Verizon Maryland

Mr. Bishop welcomed the participants and provided them with a brief synopsis of what his organization does within the Verizon organization. Verizon State Government Affairs includes state government, county and municipal government. He said his group wanted to establish relationships with the members of the RMC. He said he would provide the RMC with a contact list for Verizon in each county. He introduced his connectivity team, Josh Bowers, Data Consultant – Verizon Wireless, and Chris Morrow, Assistant Store Manager, Annapolis.

Josh Bowers introduced Verizon's wireless investments in the State. Verizon activated more new wireless cells in 2014 than in any year in the past 10 years. They recently upgraded their wireless network to XLTE that will provide double the bandwidth. He said they have some exciting new products available and demonstrated their home wireless device, Verizon Home Fusion, which runs on Verizon's Wireless Network.

Chris Morrow then presented Verizon's 4G LTE Wireless Router. The 4G LTE Wireless Router can connect up to ten devices and has a range 300 feet outside and 150 feet within an office. It can act as a backup network for business. PEPCO uses the 4G LTE Wireless Router as a primary network in their retail locations. Verizon also offers a wireless home network, Wireless Home Phone Connect. This device allows you to take your landline phone number with you.

Tabb Bishop concluded the presentation by saying the items presented are just some of the investments Verizon is making to make internet connectivity available.

Prior to moving to the next item on the agenda Mr. Warner acknowledged elected officials and their representatives who were in attendance: Linda Prochaska from U.S. Senator Mikulski's office; Kim Kratovil from U.S. Senator Cardin's office; Maryland Senator-elect Addie Eckardt, Maryland Delegate Wendell Beitzel as well as Congressman Harris' representative Mary O'Keefe.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Warner asked the members of the Executive Board to review the minutes from the August 20, 2014 meeting and provide any corrections. With no corrections cited, Mr. Warner asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Senator-elect Eckardt moved to accept the minutes, Mr. McLoughlin seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF)

Charlotte Davis presented the results of the FY15 MAERDAF Grant cycle. We had 54 applicants with requests amounting to over \$1,000,000. The MAERDAF Grant Review Board made awards to 17 nonprofits amounting to \$170,000 in awards. A handout providing more details was made available to the participants.

Financial

Charlotte Davis told the group for FY15 we received \$167,000 from the State of Maryland General Operating Fund and had a holdover from Invest Maryland \$95,585 for a total of \$262,585. We have expended \$51,498 to date. Mr. Warner asked for a motion to accept the financial report into the record. Ms. Mason moved to accept the financial report, Senator-elect Eckardt seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Youth Assessment and Regional Planning Initiative

Mr. Warner introduced Doris Mason who presented an update on the Youth Assessment and Regional Planning Initiative. Ms. Mason told the group we have completed the first phase of the study. We surveyed 2,300+ youth in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties through a web-based survey. Preliminary findings show 69% of the youth surveyed feel their community is a good place to raise a family while 57% feel there are better career opportunities available elsewhere. Seventy-six percent (76%) have never been asked by an adult to become involved in their community; however, 74% said they would participate if asked.

Ms. Mason told the group the RMC and the Upper Shore would be holding youth/adult town hall meetings on December 8, 9 and 10 and invited individuals to participate.

Legislative

Mr. Warner introduced Josh Hastings, Chair of the Legislative Committee. Mr. Hastings said the Legislative Committee has been meeting regularly. The September 4, 2014 meeting had 46 participants. There was a review of legislative priorities from previous years as well as priorities outlined during the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Summer Conference in August.

One priority that keeps resurfacing is the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPiF). There were a number of other ideas discussed during the meeting including land use, energy and health care.

Ann Jones of Partners for Open Space was the guest speaker. The next meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2014 at the Wye Research and Education Center in Queenstown.

The RMC will be having a Legislative Advocacy Day on Thursday, February 19, 2015. Mr. Hastings encouraged attendees to sign up using the sheets available on each table.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)

Mike Pennington said that the RMC will continue to promote RMPIF. However, the election in November effected how the RMC will move forward. The new administration will have to submit its budget shortly after the new governor's inauguration. Mr. Pennington encouraged members to participate in our next Legislative Committee Meeting December 4 if they have ideas or would like to help in our efforts to get funding.

Health Care Committee

Chairman Warner introduced our Second Vice-Chair and Chairman of the Health Care Committee Tom McLoughlin. The Health Care Committee had been on a temporary hiatus due to the Governor's recommission of the task force to study telehealth. The Maryland Health Care Commission's Telemedicine Task Force Report was delivered to the Governor in October. . Mr. McLoughlin gave a short synopsis of the highlights of the Task Force Report. With the completion of the Task Force work, the Health Care Committee is ready to resume its work. The Health Care Committee will be restructured and convened over the next few months.

Planning and Development Committee

Chairman Warner introduced Mike Thielke, Chairman of the Joint Planning and Development Committee and former Acting Executive Director for the Rural Maryland Council. The Joint Committee comprises members of both the RMC and the Rural Maryland Foundation. Members of the Planning and Development Committee have met every six weeks over the past six months and have been working on a three-year work plan.

The Committee sees the RMC working toward a leadership partnership to addressing rural Maryland's challenges. They would like to have six regional roundtables, one in each regional council area as well as Harford/Carroll County, to invite public comment. These roundtables will allow the Committee to adjust the work of the Council and the Foundation based on public comment.

Priority issues discussed by the Committee include:

Broadband – the RMC will resurrect the Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board to address the outlying rural areas where there is still no broadband.

Agriculture – the RMC will investigate the USDA RCPP program to look for ways to make farming more sustainable.

Energy – Maryland Energy Administration Game Changer Competitive grant. RMC would advocate more funds be made available through this grant. We would advocate for alternative energy sources to be pursued including wood energy especially in public buildings.

Workforce/Economic Development – Creation of a mobile lab for technology and soft skill training; possible partner with community colleges.

Health – The USDA summer feeding program with a training component to teach soft skills to youth

Youth – would continue youth engagement started with the Youth Assessment pilot; possibly incorporate the summer feeding program and soft skills training into the program.

Mr. Thielke said the RMC would continue to evaluate possible priorities based on the following criteria:

- Must have a measureable outcome or accomplishment which can be generated within a 12-month period
- Must address a priority issue which is of importance to funders
- Must address a priority issue which is of importance to Rural Maryland
- Must have a meaningfully unique impact on a priority issue

The Planning and Development Committee would welcome additional members. Mr. Thielke invited interested parties to contact the RMC office.

Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture (GICA)

Chairman Warner said RMC's representative to the Commission, Erroll Mattox, was not able to attend the meeting and asked Charlotte Davis to present Mr. Mattox' report. At the last GICA meeting, the Maryland Office of Tourism made a presentation on a new promotional campaign and advised there are more people coming to the State. State Highway Administration has just finalized a signage program promoting agriculture and ag-tourism. There was a Department of Labor update on housing issues for H2 workers. There was discussion about the definition for what is ag-tourism. Lastly there was discussion regarding food sampling at farmers markets. The RMC will be doing some research on this topic and will advocate for legislation.

Guest Speaker: Dr. William McGowan of USDA Rural Development

Our Second Vice-Chair Tom McLoughlin provided an introduction.

Dr. McGowan said he has been in his position as State Director for almost a year. Dr. McGowan believes in the four "P's" – People, Partners, Programs and Place. People are critical; we cannot do the work we do without great people supporting the effort. He introduced Kathy Beisner, his assistant and a former acting director for the USDA Rural Development; Gloria Occhipinti, Senior Housing Loan Specialist in Southern Maryland, and Rick Gordon, USDA Rural Development General Field Representative for Telecommunications. Dr. McGowan strongly urged members to reach out to Mr. Gordon with any questions or requests for assistance regarding broadband.

Dr. McGowan went on to discuss USDA Rural Development partnerships and programs. He highlighted the regional councils and the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center as and praised their work.

Last year was a very good year for Marylanders with \$538 million at work in Maryland. Water and environmental programs received \$36 million dollars; community facilities received \$9 million. Dr. McGowan emphasized the USDA Rural Development does not just dispense money. Under the water and environmental programs, USDA is currently working with 56 local government and nonprofit partners in Maryland. They are working with 36 partners in community facilities projects.

Additionally, other USDA program dollars breakdown as follows:

- \$11.9 million dollars in business and cooperative programs;
- \$7 million dollars in the guaranteed loan program;
- \$458 million dollars in the single family home guaranteed loan program;
- \$22.5 million dollars in the multi-family home guaranteed loan program

There are broadband programs in the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill Broadband Loan Program is designed to provide loans for funding, on a technology neutral basis, for the costs of construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equipment to provide broadband service to eligible rural communities. Blue Surf, on the Eastern Shore, is a recipient of this program.

Allegany County is the recipient of another USDA Rural Development program called the Community Connect Grant Program. The Community Connect program serves rural communities where broadband service is least likely to be available, but where it can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for citizens.

USDA also offers the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant program. San Mar Children's Home in Hagerstown was a recipient of a \$450,000 grant to do telemedicine in psychiatry.

Dr. McGowan said USDA Rural Development is interested in community economic development. He invited people to pick up the phone and invite USDA to work with you from the start.

In closing, Dr. McGowan discussed community development and the tenets of the Harwood Institute.

Guest Speaker: Lori Stone

Mike Pennington introduced Lori Stone. Lori Stone is the State of Maryland Broadband Coordinator for planning and deployment of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network in Maryland. She's based in the Statewide Interoperability Program Management Office of the Maryland State Police. She previously worked on Maryland First, a statewide emergency management system and at Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

Ms. Stone gave an overview of the network and where they are in the deployment. The U.S Federal Government is investing money in building a nationwide public safety network. The law for this public network passed in 2012. The law set aside 20 MHz of the broadband spectrum and provided \$7 billion dollars for the states to build these networks.

FirstNet will be data network built to provide broadband wireless coverage to first responder mobile devices. Similar to commercial networks, FirstNet will be a state-of-the-art 4G LTE network, providing a broadband data connection to tablets, laptops, phones, wearable tech, and the other wireless devices that have changed our world. Unlike a commercial network, FirstNet will be hardened to public safety grade, so that first responders will be able to rely on FirstNet to perform its mission critical task in the worst of conditions. It will give first responders access to information that is shared on social media, community mapping and GIS, and access to material safety data sheets and other information that will help them respond safely and intelligently.

The Maryland State Police are responsible for overseeing this project. Maryland FirstNet's Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) includes members of police and fire, MML, MACo, MEMA, DoIT, DNR, DBM and other State agencies as well as elected officials like Delegate Adrienne Jones and Senator De Grange. Maryland FirstNet is talking to public safety, GIS and others to develop the State's plan. Once the plan is developed, it will go to the Governor. If the Governor approves the plan, FirstNet will come in and build the network. The Governor can also submit his own plan, if approved FirstNet will help Maryland build and implement the plan.

Rural Maryland Foundation (RMF)

Mr. Dan Rider told the membership the Foundation has been reconstituted and the Board of Trustees is now meeting regularly. There are vacancies on the Foundation Board and he encouraged members to participate. He is happy with the progress the Foundation has made asked for members to demonstrate support for the RMC and the Foundation by pledging a suggested donation of \$100 each. As a gesture of good faith, he presented his donation to the Treasurer, Kevin Brooks. The purpose of this is to be able to demonstrate to potential donors that the members of the RMF Board of Trustees as well as the Executive Board members of the RMC are committed.

The Foundation has been working on a short video to promote rural Maryland, the ASPIRE Campaign. Filming has been completed and the project is currently being edited.

Nominating Committee

Mr. Mike Pennington presented the nominations for RMC's Executive Committee and Executive Board for 2015. Officers nominated for 2015 include:

- Mr. Scott Warner, Chair
- Ms. Doris Mason, First Vice Chair
- Mr. Josh Hastings, Second Vice Chair

Mr. Pennington asked if there were any other nominations for the Executive Committee and/or the Executive Board; there were no remarks from the participants. Kevin Brooks made a motion for nominations to be closed, Josh Hastings seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Pennington moved acceptance of the slate as presented. Mr. Brooks seconded, the motion was carried.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 pm.

Next Meeting: Friday January 30, 2015 at 12:00 Noon, location to be determined.