

Minutes

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

Friday January 30, 2015, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

President's Conference Room East, Miller Senate Building, Annapolis, Maryland

Participants:

Delegate Kathy Afzali	Denise Lovelady
Peggy Alpert	Katherine Magruder
Irnande Altena	Doris Mason
Ericka Boston	Pat McDonouh
R. Kevin Brooks	Steve McHenry
Senator Joan Carter-Conway	Thomas McLoughlin
JoAnn Coates-Hunter	John McQuaid
Deborah Davis	Senator Thomas "Mike" Miller
Senator Addie Eckardt	Senator Wayne Norman
Peter Ettinger	Mary O'Keeffe
Greg Farley	Kerry Ose
Dean Fisher	Temi Oshiyoye
Kurt Fuchs	Gail Owings
Delegate Glen Glass	Mike Pennington
Rodney Glotfelty	Linda Prochaska
Domenick Grande	Louise Reynnells
Santo Grande	Daniel Rider
Roxanne Hale	Donna Sasscer
Lisa Hall	Mellissa Sager
John Hartline	Jack Shaw
Ron Hawkins	Bill Stansbury
Dana Hendrickson	Matthew Tefteau
Gary Hodge	Mike Thielke
Melanie Holland	Scott Travers
Edward Holland III	Delegate David Vogt
Ryan Hollen	Luke Wallwork
Keith Holmes	Scott Warner
Delegate Kevin Hornberger	
Senator Michael Hough	RMC Staff:
Ann Jones	Charlotte Davis, Executive Director
Kimberly Kratovil	Kathy Vernacchio, Administrative Assistant
Wilbur Levensgood	

Chairman Warner called the meeting to order at approximately 12:24 p.m.

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director for the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) thanked Senator Middleton for sponsoring the RMC's use of the President's Conference Center West. She also recognized the elected officials in attendance. They included Senator Eckardt, Senator Hough, Senator Norman, Delegate Afzali,

Delegate Hornberger, Delegate Vogt, Councilman Hall, Commissioner Levensgood from Caroline County, Kim Kratovil representing Senator Cardin, Linda Prochaska representing Senator Mikulski, and Mary O’Keeffe representing Congressman Harris.

Doris Mason, First-Vice Chair of the RMC and Executive Director of the Upper Shore Regional Council introduced Senate President Mike Miller as our first guest speaker.

Guest Speaker: Senate President Thomas “Mike” Miller

Senator Miller welcomed everyone to the meeting. He related various stories regarding his background, his family, his experience serving on several national boards, and his experience as member of the Maryland General Assembly. He also acknowledged some of the other elected officials in the room and again stated he is confident everyone will be able to work together in this legislative session.

Chairman Warner thanked the Senate President for speaking to the members assembled.

Mr. Warner then recognized Senator Joan Carter-Conway. Senator Conway was the lead sponsor of the Senate bill to extend the sunset date for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. Mr. Warner thanked Senator Conway for her past and continued support.

Chairman Warner then introduced the next speaker, Gary Hodge. Mr. Hodge was asked to speak on the passing of Bill Walker, the RMC’s first executive director.

In Memoriam - Bill Walker

Mr. Hodge said he was honored to be invited to provide an in memoriam to Bill Walker.

“Bill Walker was instrumental in creating what is an institution in Maryland now. Mr. Hodge said it is often a question “Can a man of honor and virtue succeed in this world?” Bill Walker is the answer to that question because Bill defined success as service. He spent many years in State government, a number of them in the Department of Housing and Community Development.

In the early 90s George H.W. Bush started an initiative, the President’s National Initiative for Rural Development. The paperwork for that initiative landed on Bill’s desk. All the states were forming rural development councils. There were about ten states that were out of the gate forming these councils. At that time there was a sense of urgency to maximize the benefits from this initiative for Maryland. So out of that came an Executive Order signed by the Governor in 1994.

Bill had a bigger vision; it was not just complying with some obscure bureaucratic rules, but making a voice for rural Maryland. We had many of the same dynamics 20 years ago as we see today. In Mr. Hodge’s experience in Southern Maryland, the residences of our rural communities do not ask for much from government and quite often get even less than that. Quite often there has been an issue of equity, an issue of fairness between what is made available to the urban and suburban areas, and what is made available to our rural communities. To address these important issues, Bill felt there needed to be a voice for rural Maryland not just a bureaucratic placeholder in the scheme of things, but a vibrant, active organization representing the communities in the State, counties and municipalities, that could step

forward and talk to the legislators in Annapolis and talk to the Governor to mobilize action that would improve the economic standing of our rural areas.

This set in motion a strategy to engage Casper Taylor, Speaker of the House of Delegates at that time. We worked very closely with Speaker Taylor and were able to craft a very unusual bill. At that time we were looking at one position in State government that was funded by the federal government. We were successful in creating a bill that created an independent agency that prevented that entity from being submerged under any other State department and guaranteed it funding every year. With the help of Speaker Taylor and Mike Miller, House Bill 842 passed unanimously in both houses; that established the Forvm for Rural Maryland. In 2003, the name was changed to the Rural Maryland Council.

Bill Walker was a very, very fine person. Sometimes you are fortunate enough to work with people who we would say are guileless. Bill had no hidden agendas, he knew everybody in the State, he worked for many years with the Appalachian Regional Commission, became the 13th Appalachian States representative in Washington after he left the job as director of the Forvm for Rural Maryland. Bill knew everybody. There is nothing like the experience we had crossing this State from Garrett County to the Shore meeting with every board of commissioners, meeting with every city council, convening public forums. We were shocked at the number of people who would turn out at a public forum in the rural areas of Maryland to talk about this mission and this vision, and what could be done by an affective organization to persuade to advocate for what is needed in the rural areas of the State.”

Approval of Minutes

The Chair reviewed the minutes asking the membership if there were any changes or corrections. With no changes or corrections offered, there was a motion for the minutes to be accepted. Mike Pennington made a motion to accept, Kevin Brooks seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously accepted.

Committee Reports

Financial

Charlotte Davis provided a financial report of the Council. For Fiscal Year 2015, the Council has \$262,582.00 available revenue; as of January 5, 2015, we have spent \$99,499.14. We are in a good financial position for 2015. Chair Warner asked if there were any questions regarding the financials. With no questions from the floor, he called for a motion to accept; Mike Pennington moved for acceptance of the financials, Kevin Brooks seconded, and the financials were unanimously accepted.

Youth Engagement Project

First Vice Chair, Doris Mason, provided the group with a preliminary summary of the youth study. She told those present that the Upper Shore Regional Council along with the Rural Maryland Council partnered with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to conduct a pilot study on the Upper Shore.

There are four stages to the study. We have completed three stages. Initially we electronically surveyed 2,500 young people in grades six through 12 in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne’s Counties. We were careful

to ensure a statistically valid sampling in each of the counties. After surveying them electronically, we conducted focus groups, three in Cecil, three in Queen Anne's, and two in Kent County. We only conducted two in Kent County because the school system is smaller in relation to the other counties. In all we engaged with approximately 140 young people to discuss what they would like to see in their communities, politically, economically and socially ten years into the future. We then conducted town halls in each county engaging people who work with children including the school superintendents, members of county council, the Chambers, and others. Common themes and strategies for engaging young people were part of that discussion.

Ms. Mason thanked the school superintendents, Dr. D'Ette Devine - Cecil, Dr. Karen Couch - Kent, and Dr. Carol Williamson in Queen Anne's, for all their support noting that they provided us with school representatives to help administer the survey and conduct the focus groups.

Ms. Mason highlighted some common themes:

- Many of our youth, 58.5%, feel there is a good quality of life in our communities; about half said they would like to live in the local area in the future.
- For those who did not want to stay in their community, 57% believe there is a lack of career opportunities, and believe there are more opportunities elsewhere.
- We know workforce development issues are important; 56% of the youth surveyed believe they can make more money elsewhere.
- Forty-one percent (41%) talked about a lack of social entertainment in their community.
- More encouraging, 69% of youth surveyed said their local community is a great place to raise family.
- In comparing answers to the national average, our youth answered higher than the national average wanting to stay in their community. However, when asked if they have ever had an adult ask them to become involved in their community, politically, socially, economically, we were well below the national average.
- We are also below the national average when youth were asked if they planned to attend college or a trade school after high school.

We are now working on stage four of the project. We are working with Washington College to display the data. The GIS Department is working on a dashboard to display what we have learned. We are going to use what we have learned to do community based planning and engage community partners in strategies geared toward young people.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)

Mike Pennington, RMPIF Chair, said due to the change in the General Assembly and the Administration, we have to provide new members of the House and Senate with information on the importance of the Rural Maryland Council and needs of our rural areas. The Governor presented his budget and RMPIF was not included. However, given the environment we are operating in with cuts to education and transportation it is understandable, it will be a challenge to add funding for our program. We are still working to put this effort forward

Chairman Warner acknowledged Delegate Glass and Delegate Mautz who stopped by to participate in our meeting.

Legislative

Josh Hastings, our Legislative Committee Chair, was out of the country, therefore, Charlotte Davis, RMC's Executive Director, provided a report to the membership. The Legislative Committee has met once in person and twice by conference call since the November 2014 Annual Meeting.

The Legislative Committee has developed a list of 2015 legislative priorities resulting from these meetings. These priorities include level funding of the RMC, level funding of the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), MARBIDCO, and a small increase of funding for the Regional Councils to the historical legislative intention. We are happy to say these items are level funded in the Governor's budget. We thank the Governor for his support in this tough fiscal climate.

In addition to the budget issues, our top priority is to continue to advocate for funding of the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund.

We would also advocate for legislation to expand rural health programs to include expansion of loan reimbursement programs, expansion of telehealth, and, new for us this year, expansion of the scope of practice for nurse practitioners.

Another area of legislative priority addresses viable agriculture, forestry and rural communities. We advocate support for Program Open Space, which is the funding source for Maryland's Rural Legacy Program, and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). These programs are designed to preserve land in rural and agricultural communities.

Finally, last year we supported transportation funding for our rural communities. Unfortunately, highway user revenues have not been restored in this year's budget. We will continue to advocate for those funds to be restored in future budgets.

On February 19, 2015, we are holding Rural Maryland Day in Annapolis. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. in the Neall Conference Room at the James Senate Building. We have scheduled appointments to meet with legislators before and after session so that we might discuss our legislative priorities. We will finish with lunch at noon. Please sign up to participate.

Planning and Development Committee

Mike Thielke provided an update on the activities of the joint Rural Maryland Council/Rural Maryland Foundation Planning and Development Committee. The Committee has met on approximately nine occasions. During those meetings six priority issues were identified: workforce and economic development, youth engagement, health care, continuation of the broadband issue, agriculture and energy – specifically biomass and wood energy.

The Committee is working to formulate their recommendations to both boards. There is one recommendation that emphasis of these priority issues give direction to the utilization of this year's MAERDAF grant awards so that, at an organizational level, we begin to focus on and achieve outcomes pursuant to our stated goals.

Health Care Committee

Thomas McLoughlin said the first committee meeting in recent years will occur on March 25, 2015. He thanked Steve McHenry for offering MARBIDCO's conference room as a meeting site.

We have begun to engage members throughout the health care community to participate in this Committee. Prior to this time, we were awaiting the report of the Telemedicine Task Force. Mr. McLoughlin hopes the RMC Health Care Committee will address what role the RMC might play moving forward. He suggested the RMC might help identify priorities within telemedicine, especially in the area of mental health. Hopefully, the RMC could help address scope of practice issues in this area. As you look across the country, you find there are a number of nurse practitioners providing mental health support and there are a variety of regulations associated with those practices.

Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture

Erroll Mattox, the RMC Representative on the Commission, had a scheduling conflict and was unable to be at the meeting. Chairman Warner advised the Commission only meets twice yearly and there was nothing new to report. However, Mr. Mattox has offered to bring RMC member concerns to the next Commission meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Charlotte Davis reported on recent activities of the Executive Director. Ms. Davis advised the group the RMC has been collaborating with Volunteer Maryland to hold information sessions throughout the State. Volunteer Maryland provides Americorp volunteers as volunteer coordinators in non-profit organizations to build capacity in rural nonprofits and the RMC may be able to provide MAERDAF grant money to those organizations to help fund the stipend required. We have done four sessions to-date and have six more sessions scheduled. Ms. Davis recognized Kerry Ose, Outreach Coordinator for Volunteer Maryland, and suggested participants reach out to her if they could not attend an information session.

RMC also partners with Community Development Network (CD Network). CD Network is the statewide entity that looks at community development. CD Network and RMC are organizing regional meetings around the State to talk to community development organizations about their needs in areas of training, issues they face and how CD Network and RMC can help. Meetings have already occurred in Southern Maryland and Western Maryland; we are working to organize a meeting on the Eastern Shore. Ms. Davis recognized Odette Ramos, Executive Director for CD Network.

Fiscal Year 2015 MAERDAF Grant Recipient Interim Reports were received earlier this week.

The RMC sponsored the Eastern Shore Business Competition. The winner of that award was announced at the Entrepreneur Expo. An Ocean City company, NuVu, was the winner of that competition.

The RMC also partners with the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center to offer a “best rural entrepreneur” award at the InvestMaryland competition; awards will be announced in April.

Ms. Davis also serves on the Sustainable Growth Commission, which recently published a report, “Reinvest Maryland,” which talked about infill development in our existing municipalities. They are going to be releasing a resolution supporting mass transit throughout the State including mass transit in rural areas.

The RMC is starting to plan its 2015 Rural Summit and has a planning committee meeting coming up. Please contact our office if you would like to participate in planning the summit.

Ms. Davis serves on the steering committee for Partners for Open Space. Partners for Open Space is a statewide coalition of over 100 groups seeking to secure, save and protect Maryland’s land conservation programs.

This morning we held a breakfast for new rural legislators. We had a great turnout; out of approximately 69 new legislators, 28 new legislators, attended. These legislators came from rural, suburban and urban areas. We thank all legislators for their participation.

Rural Maryland Foundation

Chairman Warner acknowledged the past contributions of Kevin Brooks and Mike Thielke while introducing Daniel Rider as the current president of the Rural Maryland Foundation. Mr. Warner thanked Mr. Rider for his current leadership role in the Foundation.

Mr. Rider reminded those present that the role of the Foundation is to act as a conduit to allow the RMC to continue its mission. As the RMC and the Foundation move forward in their mission, it is important to demonstrate our commitment to various philanthropic organizations we might solicit to support us. To that end, Mr. Rider reminded those present to contribute to the Foundation. The suggested donation is \$100.00; however, any contribution is greatly appreciated and will serve to demonstrate our memberships’ commitment to our mission.

As a compliment to this call for participation, Mr. Rider told the group that the Foundation sponsored an outreach piece that was inspired by a similar campaign in Maine, “What do you Aspire for Rural Maryland?” He played the video for those present.

Chairman Warner concluded the presentation by saying there are two endings for the video. One ending asks that people participate in the survey; the other is geared toward legislators and asks that they fund Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. Chairman Warner said the RMC will continue to work to get funding for RMPIF. He thanked various legislators for their continued support and recognized Senator Eckardt, Senator Middleton, and Senator Conway noting that the conversation is not

about rural versus urban. Senator Conway is an urban senator who recognizes that issues like broadband access are the same whether it is urban or rural.

Adjournment

Chairman Warner concluded the meeting by asking for a motion to adjourn. Steve McHenry made the motion to adjourn, Santo Grande seconded; the meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.