

RMC Legislative Committee
October 2, 2015
Via conference call
Meeting Minutes

Participants: Josh Hastings, Scott Warner, John Hartline, Erroll Mattox, Mike Pennington, Tom McLoughlin, The Honorable Wilber Levengood, Steve McHenry, Kurt Fuchs, Paige Bethke, Linda Prohaska, Joanne Richart-Young, Odette Ramos, The Honorable Seth Howard, Temi Oshiyoye, Charlotte Davis, RMC Executive Director, Kathleen Vernaccio, RMC Staff

The meeting convened at approximately 2:04 pm.

Minutes

The minutes from the September 21, 2015 committee meeting were presented. With no changes, the minutes were approved.

2015 Legislative Review

The Committee reviewed the 2015 Legislative Review document and discussed potential legislative issues that may arise in the upcoming Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly. Charlotte Davis reported that Senator Edwards still plans to reintroduce his rural economic development bill from last year. The sales tax exemption for agricultural equipment repeal bill may be reintroduced. There was also discussion regarding the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Neighborhood Business Works program. The Secretary is looking to allocate \$50 million a year for small business development. For rural communities to apply, they need to have a "sustainable community" designation which can be challenging for small rural communities. The secretary may be looking to expand to Priority-Funding Areas or make the whole state a "sustainable community". The Department will also be revamping finance programs, but nothing has been announced yet. The Program Open Space workgroup as convened by Joint Chairmen's Report language has been discussing a "lock box"-type bill for protection of the POS funds. The Ag surcharge program to fund the Next Generation Farm Land Acquisition Installment Purchase Agreement program will be an issue. Montgomery County is working on legislation to amend the current law. Currently surcharge funding has been going to fund the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation administrative expenses with no funding left to fund the Next Generation program.

Legislative Priorities

The Committee reviewed the current draft 2016 Legislative Priorities document. There was discussion regarding the possible preceptor legislation and the Thornton education funding formula. Broadband expansion was also discussed.

Other Issues

Odette Ramos discussed potential changes to land bank law. Senator Eckardt will be sponsoring enabling legislation for counties to create local land banks. Also discussed was the Limited Liability Corporation transparency bill. Properties that are held by LLCs are typically difficult to work with since often there is no clear contact information for the owners. CD Network is looking at legislation that will address this through resident agents. Paige Bethke discussed increasing public transportation which is underfunded in rural areas. The Maryland Clean Energy Center will be introducing Green Bank legislation. We should also anticipate reintroduction of the chicken tax or chicken house house

moratorium legislation. It was requested that the RMC oppose legislation that will impose a tax on poultry or a moratorium on chicken houses. This legislation will have a negative impact on economic development in rural areas.

Announcements

Rural Maryland Day in Annapolis (Lobby Day) is scheduled for February 11th

Welcome Breakfast for Rural Legislation is scheduled for January 29th.

Next Committee Meeting: January 4, 2015 from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm at the Maryland Department of Agriculture in Annapolis.