

RMC/RMF Joint Planning and Development Committee
October 22, 2014
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
UMES President's Reading Room
Richard A. Henson Center, Room 2122 (second floor)
906 Backbone Road, Princess Anne, MD 21853

Participants:

Mike Thielke, Chair, ESEC
Bill Barnes, Eastern Shore Manufacturing Council
Doris Mason, Upper Shore Regional Council
Lisa Purnell, USDA
Scott Warner, MidShore Regional Council
Dan Rider, DNR

RMC Staff:

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director
Kathy Vernacchio, Administrative and Communications Assistant

Call to Order

The meeting convened at 10:04 am. Mr. Thielke welcomed participants. Introductions were dispensed with as all the participants were attendees of the September 11 meeting. He thanked UMES for hosting the meeting.

Minutes

Mr. Thielke reviewed the minutes of both the July 31, 2014 and the September 11, 2014 meetings. A motion was made to approve the minutes; it was seconded and passed unanimously.

Priority Issues

Mr. Thielke asked the group to revisit the developing priority issues that will drive the direction of the work plan. He suggested the group review the list in order.

Broadband:

The RMC should continue to advocate for the last mile of broadband at the local level. There was some discussion about the role of the RMC. The group agreed the RMC should provide a leadership role. Therefore, the action is facilitating, at the tri-county level, regional roundtables where RMC will provide the leadership to have meaningful conversations developing strategies going forward on the issue of last mile. These roundtable discussions should look at private-public partnerships. It may be appropriate to resurrect the Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board.

Agriculture:

Pursuing USDA RCPP

In reviewing the items previously discussed, the group decided it would be appropriate to add a component regarding the sustainability of existing farms. It was decided the RMC would look into the possibility of pursuing a RCPP grant through the USDA. The grant would be administered through the Rural Maryland Foundation. We would be a conduit for groups who do not have the organizational capacity to develop a RCPP plan.

Between now and July 15, 2015, the RMC will create a working group to develop a strategy and a grant proposal for the RCPP program. During the beginning of 2015, we will outreach to identify groups that would be candidates for the RCPP program working with planning directors and conservation groups.

Promoting New Farmers

The RMC will work with the USDA to identify and encourage veterans and minorities. By conducting outreach activities throughout rural Maryland, the RMC can serve as a conduit for veteran and minority farmers to develop a relationship with USDA.

Although the RMC is a rural advocate, we recognize it would be appropriate to have an urban/suburban component to this outreach recognizing there would be individuals in some areas that would have an interest in farming. Lisa Purnell introduced the Rural Coalition as a possible partner organization for these efforts. The Rural Coalition has worked with Accokeek Farms and Big City Farms. Big City Farms has created an urban farm with high tunnels in Brooklyn Park.

Youth

Energy

Ms. Davis introduced the Maryland Energy Administration Game Changer Competitive Grant opportunity. The RMC would be a facilitator for feasibility studies for innovative, early-commercialization stage energy generation. The intention of Game Change is to identify emerging technology and put it in place. Game Changer is open and accepting applications through December 19, 2014.

Mr. Rider said another grant vehicle will be announced, the Wood Energy Development Fund the purpose of this fund will be to underwrite the engineering feasibility studies for candidate facilities. There would be \$150,000.00 available to do six to 10 studies. The RMC could promote the grant program and wood energy alternatives to rural counties, especially hospitals. The RMC should reach out to Maryland Hospital Association's Green Energy designee.

Mr. Thielke suggested when we get to the topic of an annual summit instead of creating tracks we should create breakout sessions driven by our priority issues.

Workforce/Economic Development

Mr. Barnes discussed 3-D printing technology. Through an EDA grant, the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center and the Eastern Shore Manufacturing Council would create a mobile innovation lab to provide 3-D printing teaching tools and skills for entrepreneurs and manufacturers. The purpose would be to engage manufactures and show them how 3-D printing can improve their manufacturing efforts and incorporate it in their process. This mobile lab could be used in the Eastern Shore as well as other areas throughout the State.

The group went on to discuss if there were other areas where the RMC could make an impact in workforce and economic development. The subject of soft skills was discussed as a major issue. There was a discussion that the development of soft skills can be partnered with the health initiative.

Health

The RMC will further investigate the USDA Summer Feeding Program. We would partner with faith-based organizations and possibly consider soft skills training for middle schoolers. We agreed to develop our strategy for this grant by March, 2015.

Ms. Davis told the group the RMC has been approached by Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (MBPAC) to partner on a federal grant. MBPAC is looking to encourage biking and pedestrian activities in rural areas to improve obesity and health.

Work Plan Strategy

To recap the discussion, Mr. Thielke provided the following:

Broadband – the RMC will conduct regional roundtables, leadership and will resurrect the Rural Maryland Broadband Coordination Board.

Agriculture – the RMC will apply for the RCPP program – deadline July, 2015. Conduct regional roundtables to reconnect veterans and minorities with USDA.

Energy – MEA Energy Development Fund, wood grants, outreach to hospitals.

Workforce/Economic Development – mobile lab and soft skill training

Health – summer feeding program

New Business/Recommendations

Mr. Thielke suggested the RMC/RMF develop a three-year plan. He also asked that each member of the Committee to take ownership of a priority initiative.

Lisa Purnell – Agriculture

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Charlotte Davis – Health
Bill Barnes – Workforce Development/Economic Development
Doris Mason – Youth
Dan Rider – Energy
Scott Warner - Broadband

Mr. Thielke asked that in subsequent meeting the members try to bring funding opportunities to the table for Committee discussion.

Mr. Thielke and Mr. Barnes asked that the RMC and RMF consider providing a matching fund commitment for the mobile lab outlined above. The EDA grant requires a match. Would the RMC and RMF provide commitment letters to provide \$10,000 per year, per organization for a total of \$60,000 over three years.

Planning and Development Calendar

The group agreed on the following meeting dates:

Friday, December 12, 2014, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – 339 Busch’s Frontage Road, Annapolis, MD
Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD
Thursday, March 5, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – location TBD
Thursday, April 16, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – location TBD
Thursday, May 28, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – location TBD
Thursday, July 16, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – location TBD
Thursday, August 27, 2015, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – location TBD

The next meeting is December 12, 2014 at USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, John Hanson Business Center, 339 Busch's Frontage Road, Suite 301, Annapolis, MD 21409-5543

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 noon.