



Rural Maryland Council (RMC)
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Date: November 13, 2020
Time: 12 pm to 2 pm
Type: Zoom Webinar

Participants: Chris Benzing, Mike Thielke, Charlotte Davis, Dakota Matthews, Amanda Clevenger, Lindsay Thompson, Matt Tefteau, John Hartline, Dan Rider, Scott Warner, Greg Padghm, and Megan D'Arcy

Welcome and Agenda Overview

John Hartline, Chair called the meeting to order at 12:06pm. Mr. Hartline welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the day's meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hartline asked for approval of the RMC Executive Committee Meeting, September 10, 2020 minutes. Lindsey Thompson moved to approve; Chris Benzing seconded. The motion passed to accept the 9/10/2020 minutes. Mr. Hartline asked for approval of the RMC Executive Committee Meeting, September 23, 2020 minutes. Chris Benzing moved to approve; Mike Thielke seconded. The motion passed to accept the 9/23/2020 minutes. Mr. Hartline asked for approval of the RMC Executive Board Meeting, September 25, 2020 minutes. Chris Benzing moved to accept; Dan Rider seconded. The motion passed to accept the 9/25/2020 minutes.

Financial

Charlotte Davis reported on the FY2021 current fiscal budget. Ms. Davis stated that the State is still under a spending freeze, but we are still spending money as the Council is currently processing grant agreements and to date \$108,676.11 has been spent, leaving \$346,571.89. Three grants were turned down, totaling \$20,684. Ms. Davis reported that RMC staff will be receiving new personal laptops so that they are able to access office files from telework locations. The cost of the laptops was \$4,000 and it was approved by the Department. John Hartline stated that it was critical for staff to have adequate technology and security. Mr. Hartline made a motion to accept the financial report. Chris Benzing moved to accept the budget as presented, Matt Tefteau seconded. The motion passed to accept the financial report.

Board and Committee Reports

- Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund: Charlotte Davis reported on the FY2021 MAERDAF/RMPIF in the financial report.
- Legislative Committee: Lindsay Thompson reported that both the House and Senate released their guidance for how the session will look in 2021, the summation will be virtual. She reported that there will be no in person reception and events; legislators will be on the floor only to vote; the House has an annex location to split the group; in-person meetings are discouraged; all hearings will be online, including written submission on testimony. Charlotte Davis reported that she drafted the 2021 Legislative Priorities and that she completed an advocacy matrix which highlights the legislators that she and Executive Committee members have been meeting with virtually in preparation to legislative session. In addition, to start planning Rural Maryland Day, which will have to be virtual in 2021. Chris Benzing suggested that we start planning now and send a 'Save the Date' to members. Additionally, it might be best to plan Rural Maryland Day over a couple of days and not just one. Members agreed that we will not know how to plan until we learn the schedule on opening day. Matt Tefteau stated that he is pulling together a list of pre-session events that RMC can join, and he will forward it to Ms. Davis. The committee discussed the



importance of keeping MAERDAF/RMPIF fully funded. Mr. Benzing and Ms. Thompson stated that they will set a date for the first meeting and the budget is the largest concern.

- Agriculture Committee: Matt Tefteau, Chair, reported that he reached out to Cassie Shirk and Julie Oberg to learn if GICA (Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture) was planning to meet and if the permit for the Farmer's Manual will be updated to include mental health for farmers. He stated that extension is working on a mental health component to their work. Additionally, he informed participants that things were moving forward for hemp and that there has been some relief provided to poultry farmers. Mike Thielke shared that the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center was awarded a little less than half a million dollars to create a regional agriculture innovation center and that he would like RMC have a role in it.
- Joint Planning and Development Committee: Mike Thielke, Chair reported on a succession plan that Ms. Davis recently completed regarding transition and continuity with a short-term plan if something were to happen to the Executive Director. The committee plans to review the transition plan and make recommendations at their next meeting in March.

-Organizational Policies: Charlotte Davis reported that she updated the existing personnel policy and she is continuing to work on the Continuing Operations plan. She stated that she is concerned on how to get staff back home if there is an order to shelter in place. She currently does not have authority to pay for food and lodging for staff under such circumstances. Scott Warner suggested that we grant such authority in the plan immediately. Ms. Thompson agreed that Ms. Davis needs to have authority to make such approvals in an emergency. Organizational policies will be reviewed at the next Joint Planning & Development Committee meeting in March.

- Rural Maryland Foundation: Dan Rider, President provided a Foundation report. Mr. Rider reported that he is looking into how the Foundation can raise money-what will motivate people to donate and how to best evaluate success. He stated that he first met with Charlotte Davis and John Hartline to discuss these matters and then met Kurt Fuchs and Scott Warner to continue the discussion. Mike Thielke suggested that the Foundation be project specific, but the bigger question is how to implement any plan with an all-volunteer Board and RMC staff. Ms. Davis recommended taking a grant track approach was a good idea. Dan Rider stated that they will continue to discuss this matter at their next meeting.

-Digital TV Ad: Ms. Davis reported that the 30 second Aspire 2.0 video has been running digitally and on tv in the Northern Maryland media market. She has not viewed the google analytics but will send them along to committee members once received.

- Nominating Committee: Chris Benzing, Chair reported that there were three openings in terms of geography on the Eastern Shore. The current slate nominates Sam Shoge from Chestertown, Debbie Bowden from Caroline County, and Matt Holloway from Wicomico County. Mr. Benzing asked for a motion to accept the Board Slate as it stands. Mike Thielke accepted the motion, Dan Rider seconded. The motion passed to accept the Board Slate.
- Executive Director's Report: Charlotte Davis reported that staff returned to mandatory telework with only going to the office to conduct essential work, such as processing grant agreements. Ms. Davis introduced a new staff member, Dakota Mathews from Frostburg as the Program Coordinator. She reported that RMC staff and members of the executive committee have been meeting virtually with key legislators. Ms. Davis stated that they will start planning for Rural Summit and that the Committee would most likely wait until



late March/April to decide whether it will be in-person. The staff are currently looking into virtual platforms that could be able to use if needed.

- **New Business:** Ms. Davis reviewed the nominees for the Rural Impact Awards that will be held at the RMC Annual Meeting in December and the Committee voted on the awardees as follows: Errol Mattox for Rural Community Volunteer for his service to the RMC; The Greater Cumberland Committee for Outstanding Rural Economic Development; Dave Wheelan for Rural Community Development and Senator Peters and Senator Hershey for the Rural Champion awards.

-Andover Media: Charlotte Davis asked the committee on what they thought about having videos made of the awardees accepting the awards by Andover Media for a total of \$10,000. Committee members felt that the price was too high and recommended that we ask awardees to make their own videos or plan to present virtually at the meeting.

-Draft RMC December 9, 2020 Annual Meeting Agenda: Ms. Davis asked members to review the agenda for the Annual Board Meeting and it was suggested to change the time from 12pm to 2pm to 12pm to 1pm.

-FY2020 Annual Report: Ms. Davis shared a link to the FY2020 Annual Report and asked for the committee to review and make comments by 11/23.

-2021 RMC Calendar: Ms. Davis stated that the 2021 RMC calendar was included in the meeting packet and asked committee members to review and provide feedback.

Adjourn

John Hartline thanked everyone for joining the meeting and made the motion to adjourn at 1:53pm. Scott Warner approved the motion, Dan Rider seconded. The motion to adjourn the meeting was accepted.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Friday, January 15, 2021
Location: Harry Browne's Restaurant, 50 State Circle, Annapolis, Maryland 21401