



Rural Maryland Council (RMC)
Ad Hoc Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
January 21, 2021 – 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Type: Zoom Teleconference

Participants: Leanne Mazer, Chris Benzing, Dr. Heidi Anderson, Susan O'Neill, John Hartline, Greg Padgham, Scott Warner, Mike Thielke, Matthew Tefteau, Dan Rider, Charlotte Davis, Amanda Clevenger, Dakota Matthews, Megan D'Arcy.

A. Welcome and Agenda Overview

Mr. John Hartline, Chair called the meeting to order at 3:02pm and welcomed everyone.

B. Legislative Bill Tracking

- HB97/SB66 – Department of Housing and Community Development – Office of Digital Inclusion – Established
- HB43- Department of Information Technology – Office of Broadband and Joint Committee on Broadband

Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the Council convened stakeholders earlier in the day to discuss HB0097/SB0066 and HB0043. Ms. Davis reported that the stakeholders came to a consensus to support both bills with amendments sent to the sponsors. The plan is to send 4 amendments HB0097. The amendments include uncodified language that retains the initial focus of the office and its rural lens; strike the repeal of the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund; strike the mapping responsibility as the Federal Communications Commission intends to update its mapping capabilities; and, provide enough time for a robust report on a statewide from July 1, 2021 to January 2023. Regarding, HB0043, the stakeholders recommended that the office should be in the Department of Housing and Community Development and not in the Department of Information Technology and to broaden the governing board. Overall, the stakeholders felt consensus that both bills are codifying the office of broadband into statute that ensures its continuity and stability into the future and we want to support this effort. Ms. Davis further stated that the hearing for SB0066/HB0097 is tomorrow, January 22nd and the Council has submitted testimony and she plans to testify on both ends. The hearing is tomorrow, and testimony was submitted, and Ms. Davis will testify on both of the bills.

The Executive Committee discussed the proposed amendments and agreed that they were appropriate. The main concern discussed pertained to making sure funds stay in rural areas. Mr. John Hartline made a motion to support the discussed amendments. Mr. Scott Warner moved to accept the motion; Dr. Heidi Anderson seconded. The motion passed unanimously for the Committee to approve the support of the bill with amendments.

C. 2021 Legislative Priorities Approval

Mr. John Hartline introduced the Legislative Priorities handout. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the plan is to present the priorities to the full board on the January 29, 2021 meeting. Dr. Heidi Anderson stated that she would like to provide additional text to the rural health component

and that she will send it to RMC staff to be incorporated. Mr. Scott moved to accept the 2021 legislative priorities; Mr. Chris Benzing seconded. The motion passed unanimously for the Committee to approve the 2021 Legislative Priorities.

D. FY2022 Budget

Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the FY 2022 budget was released and that RMC received an approximate \$1M cut but was included in the highlights section. Ms. Davis further stated that the Committee needs to examine what formula should be used and if we should consider asking the Governor for a supplemental appropriation. Mr. Chris Benzing suggested that the Regional Councils and RMC should be fully funded and money be taken from the grant programs. The Committee will continue to discuss alternative funding options.

E. Adjourn

Mr. John Hartline thanked everyone for attending the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris moved to accept the motion; Dr. Heidi Anderson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:49pm.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: Friday, March 26, 2021, 12p – 2 pm
Location: TBD