



Rural Maryland Council (RMC)
Quarterly Executive Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 27, 2024, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Location: Building African American Minds
31 Jowite Street, Easton, Maryland 21601

Participants: Chair Susan O'Neill, Chris Abell, A.C. Alrey, Dr. Heidi Anderson, Dr. James Bell, Keith Cornish, Jamie Cardillo, Elizabeth Chung, Liz Connelly, Claudia Cunningham, Dina Daly, Tom Filbert, Secretary Rebecca Flora, Kurt Fuchs, Alyssa Hastings, Reza Jafari, Chris Kaselemis, Melissa Kelly, Jinhee Kim, Nancy LaJoice, Timothy McLowan, Steve McHenry, Grayson Middleton, Gregory Padgham, Alice Settle-Raskin, Dan Schneckenberger, Cassie Shirk, Patty Shreves, Vernon Shruggs, Ryan Snow, Vernon Spriggs, Bill Valentine, Roseanna Vogt, Scott Warner, Jamie Williams

RMC Staff: Charlotte Davis, Megan D'Arcy, Molli Cole, Leeza DeCheubel

A. Welcome and Agenda Overview

Chair Susan O'Neill welcomed everyone and convened the meeting at 12:32 pm.

B. Meeting Minutes

Chair O'Neill requested the Board to review the meeting minutes from April 5, 2024.

Gregory Padgham motioned to approve the minutes, Chris Abell seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

C. Special Guests

Chair O'Neill introduced special guest: Ms. Dina Daly, Executive Director of Building African American Minds (BAAM). Ms. Daly provided the committee with a brief overview of how BAAM was initiated. Ms. Daly and her husband first intended to create a scholarship fund aiming to help young, black students, particularly males, continue their education at a four-year institution. Surprised by the lack of applicants, Ms. Daly further investigated the root of the issue within the community and transformed this into an after-school program as of 2004. Over the years, this shifted into a safe space for all ages, and eventually, both male and female youth.

The mic was passed to Dr. James Bell, Director of Instruction, Academic Support & Community Well-Being of BAAM. Dr. Bell informed the committee of adult and youth workforce programs that are offered by BAAM, including building communication and networking skills. In addition, Dr. Bell introduced Xavier Rahim, Workforce Development Program Coordinator. Mr. Rahim spoke of his personal experience with the after-school program, and how he aids in homework assistance to students and extra-curricular activities.

Chair O'Neill introduced guest speaker: Secretary Rebecca Flora, Maryland Department of Planning. Secretary Flora provided a brief synopsis on her life growing up in rural New York state, and how it has ultimately connected her to her current residency on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She also informed the Board on the roles of Maryland Department of Planning including data analysis and support to local communities through guiding development, along with the integrating along with other agencies to achieve similar goals. Secretary Flora informed the Board that rural areas are severely lacking in capacity in terms of growth and underpinning. She is aware of the potential within these communities and would like to work with Councils across the state to yield the best results overall.

D. Board and Committee Reports

Chair O'Neill informed the Board that the Legislative Committee is set to meet sometime in October 2024 – with the specific date to be later determined. Charlotte Davis informed the Board that there have been changes within the committee, with a new co-chair: Kurt Fuchs. The committee is actively looking for other members to fill the current vacancies in the months to come.

Ms. Davis reviewed the other associated committees. For the Health Committee, Chair Sara Seitz was unable to attend this Executive Board meeting – but members are scheduled to meet next on November 20, 2024. As for the Rural Housing Committee, RMC is hosting an Infrastructure Webinar on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, that is open for the public to attend – with the Committee set to meet directly following. Agriculture Committee is expected to meet in November 2024 to discuss issues that may arise during the upcoming session – Chair Matthew Tefteau was unable to attend this Executive Board meeting. The Joint Planning Committee is currently working on examining the raw data provided through the Rural Issues Survey – the analysis is expected to be provided during next meeting. Ms. Davis then thanked those who were able to join the Strategic Planning mini-retreat in June 2024 – the current plan expires at the end of the year, so members are looking to put a new place in place after working with Workgroups virtually. The next Joint Planning meeting will be held Thursday, November 14, 2024. The Nominating Committee needs a new Membership Board Slate and Officers. For the Rural Maryland Foundation, President Dan Rider was unable to attend – but the Foundation is scheduled to meet Thursday, October 3, 2024, in hopes of discussing building capacity at the Foundation.

RMPIF Committee Chair, Scott Warner spoke to the Board and requested that they review FY2024 MAERDAF and RMPIF Annual Reports. The reports are expected to be finalized within the upcoming week. For FY2025 MAERDAF/RMPIF, the Council recently took a \$2.25 million cut, which greatly affected awardees. Mr. Warner commended staff and the review board on how this was handled despite the drastic cuts – overall 65 total awards went out.

Ms. Davis informed the Board that the Council is expected to begin distributing funds to awardees by the end of October. **Upon review, Chris Abel motioned to approve the FY205 Budget Report, Grayson Middleton seconded. The FY2025 Budget**

Report was unanimously approved. Ms. Davis then asked the Board to review the proposed letter to Governor Wes Moore regarding the FY2026 budget. The Council will be requesting level-funding of \$9 million to function at its full capacity and can help those who truly are able to utilize these funds through their efforts and organizations.

Bill Valentine motioned for approval of the letter to Governor Moore, Chris Abell seconded the motion. The budget level to Governor Moore was unanimously approved. The Executive Committee is expected to meet with Secretary Helene Grady, Maryland Department of Budget and Management [DBM] in the upcoming weeks to discuss the budget as well.

E. Executive Director's Report

Ms. Davis asked the Board to review the staff activity reports provided, and introduced RMC's newest member: Leeza DeCheubel, Administrative Assistant. There is no current audit update, but findings will be provided as given.

F. New Business

Ms. Davis encouraged the Board to nominate organizations and/ or individuals for the Rural Impact Awards. Nominations are due November 1, 2024 – the awards will be announced at the Annual Dinner & Awards Ceremony, December 4, 2024. There will also be a Secretaries Tour, hosted by the Council and MARBIDO that is currently being explored.

G. Adjourn

Scott Warner motioned to adjourn the meeting; Chris Abell seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:48 pm.