



RMC Quarterly Executive Board Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2024, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Location: Banneker Douglass Museum, 84 Franklin Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Participants: Chair Susan O'Neill, Melissa Kelly, Chris Mullett, Lisa Knoll, Keith Cornish, Nan Mann, Steve McHenry, Jessica Cook, Cristy Morrell, Caroline Bauerle, Jianning Zeng, Alan Schneider, Beth Hill, Alyssa Hastings, Carmella Watkins, Da'Net Sturdifan, Aletheia McCaskill, Bill Reid, Delegate N. Scott Phillips, Delegate Stuart Schmidt, Jr., Nancy Jean Fields, Alice Settle-Raskin, Bill Valentine, Cassie Shirk, Chris Benzing, Daniel Schneckenburger, Chris Abell, Cindy Stone, Daniel Rider, Secretary Kevin Atticks, Elizabeth Hill, Grayson Middleton, Gregory Padgham, John Hartline, Lindsay Thompson, Matt Tefteau, Scott Warner, and Gerardo Martinez. RMC Staff: Charlotte Davis, Megan D'Arcy, Molli Cole, Leslie Dowtin

RMC Board Members and Participants arrived between 12:00 pm and 12:15 pm and were directed to enjoy lunch in the meeting space.

Welcome

Chair Susan O'Neill welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 12:45 pm as Chair O'Neill introduced the Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks. Secretary Atticks welcomed everyone to the Museum and encouraged attendees to visit the historical site. He commented about the legislative session winding down and the importance of RMC members taking the time to chat with officials about the significance of rural Maryland. He expressed gratitude to RMC for shining the light on local regional rural areas, the products coming from it, and the talent that resides there. He also spoke about the unique challenges facing rural Maryland and the importance of being "stewards of the Bay". He stressed the need to be engaged on behalf of rural Maryland and to come up with creative solutions to address the needs in Forestry, and paper mill closures. Lastly, Secretary Attick expressed appreciation to RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis and the RMC staff for their work on behalf of rural Marylanders.

Business Spotlight

Chair O'Neil introduced the spotlight guest, Gerardo Martinez, owner of Wild Kid Acres farm in Edgewater, Maryland. Mr. Martinez talked about the interesting genesis of Wild Kid Acres farm and stated that in 2023 they had over 30,000 visitors. He provided the statistic that 70% of Latinos in Maryland are from El Salvador. He shared many aspects of his business and the doors that have opened to him since it began. He desires to inspire generational farming through the work he does. An optional tour was provided following the meeting at Wild Kid Acres farm.

Business Meeting

Chair O'Neill asked Board Members to review the January 26, 2024, Executive Board Meeting minutes. Matt Tefteau made the motion to accept the January 26, 2024 meeting minutes, and Chris Abel seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Financial Report: Charlotte Davis presented the FY2024 financial report. She stated that all but a handful of funds had been distributed and that there were some return funds from previous grants. Overall, RMC funded \$8,500,000 in grants. \$750,000 was received for the operating budget and \$481,595 has been expended. The balance will carry through the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2024. Elizabeth Chung made the motion to accept the FY2024 financial report, Steve McHenry seconded the motion. The FY2024 budget was unanimously approved. Charlotte Davis presented the FY2025 budget. Elizabeth Chung made the motion to accept the FY2025 budget, contingent upon the General Assembly's budget decision, John Hartline seconded the motion. The proposed FY2025 budget was unanimously approved.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund: Chair, Scott Warner, provided the RMPIF report. He reviewed the funding formula with the Board and discussed the breakdown of funds including – the appropriation as provided breakdown (option #1) and an alternative funding breakdown (option #2) that included rounding the numbers. Steven McHenry made the motion to approve the alternative funding option #2, and Greg Padgham seconded the

motion for option #2. The motion to accept option #2 was unanimously approved. Mr. Warner reviewed the FY2025 Grant Guidelines and Criteria. Lindsay Thompson made a motion to accept the FY2025 Grant Guidelines and Criteria, Matt Tefteau seconded the motion. The FY2025 Grant Guidelines and Criteria were unanimously approved.

Legislative Committee: Lindsay Thompson, Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee highlighted the significance of the Committee and its processes throughout the session. Ms. Thompson stated that RMC submitted sixty-six pages of testimonies during the 2024 legislative session and over 200 bills were monitored. Ms. Thompson commended RMC Executive Director and her staff for keeping up with the “amendment roulette” this session. Overall outcomes are positive as far as RMC’s priority bills, as well as other bills supported by RMC. A positive sign, as it pertains to the work of RMC, is that the budget didn’t take the same cuts as other agencies. An invitation was extended to join the Legislative Committee and the next meeting was announced.

Agriculture Committee: Chair, Matthew Tefteau, spoke about the work group that the Committee convened to discuss the State Department Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) issue. He also mentioned that SDAT has a new interim Director that the committee will be working with. He informed committee members to look out for a doodle poll regarding the date of the next meeting.

Joint Planning and Development Committee: Chair, John Hartline, discussed the RMC Fiscal Year 2025 work plan and the importance of the rural areas working together. Committee Chair Hartline reviewed the work plan with the Board and participants and discussed the changes to the work plan that were highlighted in yellow. He mentioned many events hosted by RMC, specifically, the rural legislative breakfast, which provides an opportunity to meet the rural legislators and Maryland Day, another key way to engage legislators linked in the legislative process. Chair Hartline stated that there is still work to be done in Broadband and technical assistance in the rural areas, particularly on the edges of Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. An engagement of youth study was conducted approximately seven years ago with the Upper Shore Regional Council. The questions focused on their knowledge of rural areas, the positive and negative about rural areas, and what would entice them to stay in rural areas. The outcome revealed how much high school students had been thinking about their future and where they wanted to live. With this blueprint, middle school students can be engaged in a study as an important part of Rural Maryland’s future. Scott Warner made the motion to approve the FY2025 work plan, and Grayson Middleton seconded the motion. The FY2025 work plan was unanimously approved.

Rural Maryland Foundation: Dan Rider, President, spoke of the importance of the LEAD Maryland Foundation. He referred to a memo in the materials from the Foundation to the Council, requesting \$7,500.00 for matching scholarship funding for the LEAD Maryland Scholarship program. Chris Abell made the motion to approve the \$7,500 for scholarships, John Hartline seconded the motion. The \$7,500 for matching scholarship funding for the LEAD Maryland Foundation was unanimously approved. Next President Rider referred to a second draft memo in the materials, requesting a grant to support Foundation development. This memo focused on the Rural Maryland Innovation Fund and would request \$50,000 to focus on the following goals: 1) Clearly define the Initiative’s purpose, 2) Create a business or strategic plan to ensure success and develop standard operating procedures, 3) Develop Transfer of Work scope of work, and 4) Hire a part-time or full-time staff person with the sustainability of the position in mind. John Hartline made the motion, subject to conditional and final approval by the Executive Committee, to support the Foundation’s request for \$50,000 for the Rural Maryland Innovation Fund, Scott Warner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Health Committee: An update was provided by Charlotte Davis due to technical difficulties that prevented Sarah Seitz from being heard through her virtual connection. Ms. Davis stated that the committee met on February 21, 2024, to review legislative bills and highlight areas of interest. This led to a small group discussion of health-related legislation on March 21, 2024. The next meeting will be on May 22, 2024. An invitation was extended to anyone wanting to participate.

Rural Maryland Council: Charlotte Davis provided the Executive Director report. She stated that the Council was under audit and should be completed within two weeks with a final report in June. Overall, she felt positive about the outcome, though there is some concern about follow-up for half year and previous years reporting. Also, there is a need for policies to be put in place. The RMC Administrative Assistant was introduced, as well as the other RMC staff. Also, it was announced that the RMC Administrative Assistant position has been posted on the Maryland job site. Activity reports are included in the meeting materials. Ms. Davis shared about the upcoming events between

May and July and invited all to attend as well as outreach events. Lastly, Ms. Davis informed everyone about the FY2025 Grant Cycle as well as important dates relating to it.

Chair O'Neill stated that the date of the next meeting will be clarified and sent to the Board. Scott Warner made the motion to adjourn, and Elizabeth Chung seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:13 pm.