

Rural Maryland Council
Executive Committee Meeting
Friday, March 22, 2024 – 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Virtual

Participants: Heidi Anderson, John Hartline, Susan O'Neill, Chris Benzing, Matt Teffeau, Scott Warner, Greg Padgham

RMC Staff: Charlotte Davis, Megan D'Arcy, Molli Cole, Leslie Downtin

Susan O'Neill, Chair called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm. Chris Benzing made the motion to accept the January 12, 2024 meeting minutes. Heidi Anderson, seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved. The January 26, 2024 Executive Board Meeting minutes were accepted.

Financial Report

RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis presented the financial report. For FY 2024 the majority of the grant funds have been expended. Approximately \$100,000 is left outstanding for those at \$8,557,000. For the RMC operating dollars, \$481,595 has been expended. That leaves a balance of roughly \$268,000. We need approximately \$80,000 for payroll to finish out the year. It looks like we may have additional funding left over although we have some requests to discuss that could bring down the balance. Ms. Davis suggested that the Committee meet informally in May to ask the Board for delegation authority to close out FY 2024. RMC has expended a total of \$9,039,000 and that leaves a little balance. After discussion, Heidi Anderson moved to approve the FY2024 budget. John Hartline, seconded. Heidi Anderson expressed appreciation to Charlotte Davis and the RMC staff for being good fiduciaries. The FY2025 budget of \$9,000,010, 479 was appropriated in the Governor's budget for RMC, including \$118,485 for MAERDAF. Both Houses have agreed. The final amount should be \$9,128,964.

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)

Scott Warner explained the breakdown of two funds formula alternatives. Questions were entertained. Chris Benzing moved to accept the alternative funding. Heidi Anderson, seconded. Alternative funding was unanimously approved.

Scott Warner stated that the RMPIF Committee recommended maintaining MAERDAF grant funding at \$45,000. Clarification of grant guidelines and language was updated on match requirements. Chris Benzing moved to recommend the Grant Guidelines and Criteria to the Executive Board. Greg Padgham, seconded. It was unanimously approved.

Charlotte Davis referenced the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) in the Board materials. She mentioned that RMC is under audit and solicited commits. Scott Warner offered assistance for any MAERDAF support needed by the RMC.

Legislative Committee

Chris Benzing spoke of the Bill Tracker and the 67 pieces of support. He publicly thanked the RMC staff who did the research and wrote the letters of support. He mentioned that the Bill that he helped to frame with Jeff Ghrist passed the House. It was decided not to have a dedicated at the Maryland Day event on March 25, 2024, 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, at Lawyers Mall. The next meeting will be April 15, 2024.

Charlotte Davis provided information on the Crossover Bill that the committee supported that creates a new worker cooperative under the limited liability corporation statute-a true democratically governed by worker cooperative with equal ownership across the membership.

Rural Maryland Foundation

In the absence of Dan Rider, Charlotte Davis provided the report that the Board approved two grant requests. General foundation support will be provided to the two initiatives. The Rural Issues and Research Initiative and the Rural Maryland Innovation Fund. The request for \$50,000 is included in the budget. The request will be presented to the Executive Board at the Board meeting. John Hartline moved that the recommendation be presented to the Executive Board. Heidi Anderson, seconded.

The LEAD Maryland Foundation is asking the Council to support scholarships in the amount of \$7,500.00 with the intent that the Foundation would match that request with its own \$7,500.00 for a total of \$15,000 financial support over two years for the Lead Maryland Fellows. These funds would come from the FY 2024 budget. Scott Warner moved to accept. John Hartline, seconded. It was unanimously approved to present it to the Executive Board.

Health Committee

Charlotte Davis spoke on behalf of Sara Seitz, Chair of the Health Committee. The committee weighed in on some legislation before the Legislative Committee. Next meeting will be May 22, 2024.

Rural Housing Working Committee

Charlotte Davis spoke of the PALS report which was accepted by the committee and included in the meeting materials. Local jurisdictions were surveyed. That information is included in the meeting materials. The goal of creating an Asset Map of what it looks like across the state relating to Housing Authorities, units of government, divisions of housing and community development, as well as non-profits operating in the rural areas. The RMPHF infrastructure grant for 72-unit affordable housing multi-family complex in LaPlata is under construction through an Enterprise partnership out of Baltimore, a non-profit developer. The DHCD is holding several listening sessions across the state. The next meeting will be in May.

Agriculture Committee

Matt Teffeau presented the committee report from the last meeting. The main topic was the SDAT legislation, HB640/SB869. The Cyber-ag forum was mentioned.

Joint Planning and Development Committee

John Hartline spoke of the FY2025 Workplan. Agriculture was added. New dates for 2025 have been correctly modified. Cultivate and Craft has transitioned from Grow and Fortify per Charlotte Davis. There are plans for a December event. The planning of the Strategic Planning meeting is underway. LaCharla Figgs will be reaching out to committee members. Regarding the Youth Engagement Committee, per Charlotte Davis, RMC has received an invitation to partner with 4-H University of Maryland Extension who is already doing a student day in Annapolis. It seems more efficient to work with them. There was discussion about the outcome of a 2014/2015 survey led by Doris Mason, that focused on middle school and high school students in rural areas. Per Charlotte Davis, the HHS Transportation Committee should be being resurrected shortly. Per John Hartline, there was trouble with the match. The matches were

received all at one time. This year, we've been able to run the Wheels to Wellness maybe triple the amount of last year. He anticipates a lot of good data to come near the end of FY 2024. Chris Benzing moved to recommend the new work plan to the Board. Heidi Anderson, seconded. It was unanimously accepted.

Executive Director's Report

The staff activity reports are included in the meeting materials. Charlotte Davis mentioned that RMC is under audit. The report will probably be available in June or July. Minutes may need to be taken during the Grant Review Committee meetings. RMC plans to move forward with doing it now. Ms. Davis spoke of the plans for a Cooperative 101 Webinar on May 9, 2024. Also, there will be a Cyber-Ag program at Cecil College in partnership with TedCo, with a bus tour to the cannabis facility, SunMed. The Grow Maryland Summit plans will be underway within the next week. Ms. Davis mentioned the Administrative Assistant position opening and invited members to send recommendations.

New Business

The draft agenda for April 5, 2024, Quarterly Executive Board Meeting and Legislative Luncheon was discussed.

The next meeting next meeting Executive Committee Meeting: Friday, September 27, 2024, 12 pm – 2 pm

Chris Benzing motioned to adjourn the meeting at 1:32. Greg Padgham, seconded.