



Rural Maryland Council (RMC)

Quarterly Executive Board Meeting Minute

Tuesday, January 26, 2026 – 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Miller Senate Conference Center – Sponsored by Senator Mike McKay

Participants (in-person and Zoom): Scott Warner, Gregory Padgham, Kurt Fuchs, Matt Tefteau, Pete Leshner, Alyssa Hastings, Josh Hastings, Jamie Williams, Beth Hill, Dr. Heidi Anderson, John Hartline, Beth Brewster, Jinhee Kim, Steve McHenry, Mel Litter, Dan Schneckenburger, Brandon Rosario, Elizabeth Stahlman, Jaelon Moaney, Grayson Middleton, Carmella Davis, Donna Sorce, Kimberly Kratovil, Latoya Jenkins, Dan Rider, Bill Valentine, Melissa Kelly, Adam Dubitsky, Thomas Mackay, Charlene Sharpe, Richard Blair, Rick Hemphill, E. Fatimah Hasan, Anne Hairston-Strang, Keith Cornish Alice Settle-Raskin, Steve Connelly, William Reid, Bob Agee, Shannah Minderlein, Paige McCloskey, Olivia Miller, Linda Kohler, Alyssa Young, Grant Daniels, Harrison Palmer, President Bill Ferguson, Senator Mike McKay, Senator Katie Fry Hester, Delegate April Miller, Delegate Barry Beauchamp, Delegate Susan K. McComas, Delegate Matt Morgan, Delegate Kent Roberston, Delegate Chris Tomlinson

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

Senate President Bill Ferguson was the honored guest at the January Board Meeting and addressed the Board prior to the start of the meeting. Board members and guests enjoyed a buffet lunch before the meeting began.

Scott Warner welcomed attendees at 12:52pm, recognized elected officials and partners present, and thanked all participants for attending in person and via Zoom despite winter weather conditions. Scott specifically recognized Pete Leshner (Talbot County Council) and John Hastings for attending.

Scott Warner asked participants to review the minutes of the Executive Board meeting from November 19, 2025. Kurt Fuchs motioned to approve the minutes; Matt Tefteau seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Charlotte Davis presented the FY2026 financial report. Ms. Davis reported that RMC received just over \$6 million in FY2026 funding. To date, \$330,725 had been expended in operating costs, and \$5,106,489 in grant funds had been distributed. Ms. Davis noted that five grant agreements remain outstanding and that RMC is well-positioned moving into FY2027. She also shared that the FY2027 Governor's budget reflects level funding at approximately \$6,118,000, and emphasized the importance of maintaining the funding level through final budget approval. Dan Rider motioned to accept the FY2026 financial report; Bill Valentine seconded the motion. The report was unanimously approved.

Charlotte Davis reported that a FY2026 award to the County Commissioners of Caroline County for a seafood expansion project was declined due to property issues and the inability to proceed, resulting in \$250,000 becoming available in FY2026. Ms. Davis explained that the Executive Committee discussed options and noted state fiscal constraints requiring funds to be expended by June 30. The Executive Committee recommended reallocating the \$250,000 by splitting the funds across the five regional councils, subject to an application and review process. Ms. Davis explained that the intent is to ensure the funds are distributed efficiently and expended in rural communities within required timelines through a mid-year grant award structure.

A question was raised regarding whether funds could support planning related to Maryland's 250th anniversary and associated regional festivals. Staff noted that RMC's process must remain fair, open, and auditable, and encouraged the inquiring party to coordinate with regional councils. Jamie Williams (via Zoom) motioned to approve the Executive Committee's recommendation to reallocate the \$250,000 to regional councils; Beth Hill seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Kurt Fuchs presented a Legislative Committee update and reviewed RMC's legislative priorities, emphasizing the continued focus on maintaining funding for RMC and regional councils. Mr. Fuchs highlighted materials included in the meeting packet, including legislative priorities and a budget postcard intended for legislative visits. Mr. Fuchs reminded members of Rural Maryland Day (February 12) and encouraged participation. He also provided an update on the Rural Readiness Pilot Program legislation (HB 461 / SB 300), noting a Senate hearing scheduled for February 5 and encouraging submission of written testimony. Mr. Fuchs shared that the Legislative Committee meets biweekly during session and is open to all members, with the next meeting scheduled for February 9 at 2:00 PM (virtual).

Scott Warner encouraged members to participate in Legislative Committee calls and emphasized the importance of supporting the Rural Readiness program as a capacity-building tool for smaller towns and nonprofits.

Charlotte Davis provided a Health Committee update, noting that the committee meeting is scheduled for February 18. Ms. Davis presented on the Rural Health Transformation Program being implemented by the Maryland Department of Health, which focuses on three pillars (workforce development; care delivery including telehealth and integrated/mobile care; and "Food is Medicine"). It was noted that Maryland's application was approved by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in late December 2025, with \$168 million awarded. Staff shared preliminary expectations that RMC may have approximately \$4.75 million available beginning in FY2026/27 timing, with federal timelines requiring funds to be expended by September 30. Board members were advised to expect a future cooperative agreement requiring board action.

Charlotte Davis provided an update on the Rural Housing Working Committee, which is scheduled to meet on February 26. Housing was discussed as a statewide challenge impacting workforce development and

affordability. Members were encouraged to join the committee and share input as the state housing agenda advances.

Matt Tefteau provided an Agriculture Committee update and shared that the committee plans to meet on February 9 at 1:00 PM. Anticipated agenda items include reviewing a recently released agriculture roadmap report, updates from prior commission discussions, 2026 committee goals, and any pending agricultural legislation warranting committee consideration.

Charlotte Davis provided a brief update on the Joint Planning and Development Committee, noting that the committee recently closed its issues survey and expects to present survey results at the next board meeting.

Charlotte Davis provided executive updates, recognized new board members present and online, and encouraged interested members to consider board service. Ms. Davis emphasized the importance of in-person legislative engagement and encouraged members to participate in Rural Maryland Day, noting that staff provides schedules, teams, and materials.

Ms. Davis requested approval of the Annual Report so it can be submitted to the State. Dan Rider motioned to approve the Annual Report; Jamie Williams seconded the motion (via Zoom). The motion was unanimously approved.

Announcements included upcoming rural caucus and tourism-related discussions, and reminders that RMC and staff are available to meet with applicants and partners regarding upcoming grant opportunities and portal processes. Members were encouraged to engage their legislators and remain consistent in messaging around maintaining rural program funding.

Scott Warner thanked attendees for their participation, highlighted the importance of face-to-face advocacy, and expressed appreciation to Senator McKay for support in securing meeting space. Scott noted plans to return to Annapolis for a future meeting in April. Mr. Warner asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kurt Fuchs motioned to adjourn the meeting, Dan Rider seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 2:03pm