



UPPER SHORE Regional Council

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2022

Hybrid: Virtual & In Person

Chestertown Visitor's Center Conference Room

Council Members in Attendance: Ron Fithian, Kent County Commissioner (In Person)
Chris Corchiarino Q.A.'s County Commissioner (Virtual)
Jack Wilson, Q.A.'s County Commissioner (Virtual)
Jackie Gregory, Cecil Councilwoman, (Virtual)

Guests: (all virtual) Jim Massey, Cecil Council Manager, proxy for Bob Meffley
Doris Behnke, UM Extension Office
Emily Zobel, UM Extension Office
Shelly Heller, Kent Administrator, proxy for Tom Mason
Jamie Williams, Kent Office of Economic Development
Heather Tinelli, Q.A.'s Office of Economic Development

Staff: Susan O'Neill, USRC Executive Director
Janice Palmer, USRC Executive Assistant

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- i. Board Chairman Chris Corchiarino welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 4:05 pm.
- ii. Each board member received a packet containing the Meeting Agenda, December 8, 2021 Full Council Minutes, Staff Report, Treasurer's Report, and a letter from the Maryland Forests Association, Inc. requesting use of our logo for use in legislative activities.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- i. Chair Corchiarino requested a motion for the approval of the December 8, 2021 Full Council Board Meeting Minutes. Jack Wilson motioned approval; Jim Massey seconded. All were in favor.

III. PRESENTATION

- i. Director Susan O'Neill introduced Doris Behnke and Emily Zobel, both representatives of the University of Maryland Extension who gave a presentation of the Resilient Farmer Program. Farm Stress is a constant on our Eastern Shore and a program has been put in place to help farm families, provide training for health professionals, and provide resources. A wealth of information and resources can be found at <https://go.umd.edu/farmfamily>

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- i. Director O'Neill summarized the letter of request from the Maryland Forests Association. Chair Corchiarino asked for a motion to allow the Maryland Forests Association to use the USRC logo when advocating on behalf of state forest issues. Motion presented by Jack Wilson and seconded by Jackie Gregory.
- ii. RIMPIF Funding will increase by 3 million dollars should the legislature pass the Governor's FY23 Budget. This will result in an additional \$200,000 in RIMPIF funding for each Regional Council. RIMPIF funding for regional council's is formula driven.
- iii. The Rural Economic Development Fund was created on Friday, February 18, 2022, providing \$10 million for each Regional Council. Currently this is what is known regarding the funding:
 1. The money should support economic development projects of significant economic impact.
 2. It can only be spent within the three counties the regional council represents.
 3. It cannot be spent on housing.
 4. It cannot be spent or given directly to the private sector.
 5. It can be re-granted to counties for infrastructure, capacity building, workforce development, entrepreneurship and innovation.
 6. It can be used to procure goods or services from private or public sector entities to carry out or advance economic development projects.

A phone call with all Regional Council Executive Director's and the Department of Commerce is scheduled for Friday, February 25, 2022, in hopes of answering more questions. Susan will update board members directly after the phone call with the details. Expect a new Executive Board Meeting to be scheduled to plan the parameters of the grant money.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- i. The steam vacuum preliminary test results will be provided in early Spring.
- ii. The Maryland Forestry Association published a document and Pollo Pallet is highlighted. The article can be found on our website.
- iii. Jamie Williams reported that 17 applications (doubled from last year) have been received for the Kent Micro Ag Grant. The grant review committee met today and have a goal of sending award notifications by April 1, 2022.

VI. TREASURERS REPORT

- i. Susan summarized the treasurer’s report and asked for a motion to pass. Jack Wilson motioned, and Ron Fithian seconded. All were in favor.

VII. UPDATES

- i. CECIL: Jackie reported that she attended a wagon ride in downtown North East, part of the Winter Lights Tourism Campaign supported by a USRC grant.
- ii. Great Wolf Lodge is being framed and moving along quickly.
- iii. Jackie also attended a ceremony for the Colored School in Elkton, which will become a museum.
- iv. Cecil County received federal funding for the dredging of the North East River.
- v. KENT: Ron Fithian reported that more locations are opening and that he was glad that many of the COVID restrictions were diminishing.
- vi. Millington Growth area is becoming a priority.
- vii. QUEEN ANNE’s Commissioners are busy working on the upcoming FY23 Budget.
- viii. Q.A.’s is also advocating for a new bridge to Annapolis to alleviate traffic.

VIII. ADJOURN

- i. With no further discussion, Chris Corchiarion requested a motion for adjournment. A motion to adjourn was offered by Jack Wilson. A second to the motion was offered by Jackie Gregory. The meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Palmer
USRC Executive Assistant