



# UPPER SHORE Regional Council

## EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

### Chestertown Visitors Center and Virtual

February 15, 2023

Council Members in Attendance:	Ron Fithian (Chair) Kent County Commissioner Bob Meffley (Treasurer) Cecil County Councilman Jackie Gregory (1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair) Cecil County Councilwoman
Virtual Attendance:	Chris Corchiarino (Secretary) Q.A.'s County Commissioner Jack Wilson (2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair) Queen Anne's Commissioner
Partners & Guests:	Todd Mohn, Administrator, Queen Anne's County
Staff:	Susan O'Neill, USRC Executive Director Janice Palmer, USRC Executive Assistant

### **I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Board Chairman Ron Fithian welcomed everyone, declared a quorum, and opened the meeting at 4:05 pm. Each board member received a packet containing the Meeting Agenda, January 4, 2023, Full Council Meeting Minutes, Financial Report, and the Staff Report.

### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A.** Chair Fithian requested a motion to approve the January 4, 2023, Full Council Meeting Minutes. Jack Wilson motioned approval. Chris Corchiarino provided a second. All were in favor.

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Grant Program Manager Position**

Director O'Neill requested permission to hire a full time USRC employee to administer the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Grants. This new hire would be a liaison between the counties to manage the grant timeline, commerce reports and distribution of funds, as well as the eight regional projects. Queen Anne's County agreed to administer the payroll and benefits of the new employee, who would be under

a three-year contract. Queen Anne's HR Department also agreed to help with the job description, advertising, and interviews. The salary range research suggests a salary range between \$70-73,000. The salary would be deducted from the RMED Fund Administrative fees. Susan was asked if there was enough work to justify a new hire. Susan replied yes, the addition of the RMED Fund along with eight regional projects has created quite a bit more work in the daily running of the programs and help is needed. Chair Fithian requested a motion for the hiring of a Grant Manager to be full time employee of USRC. A motion was made by Bob Meffley and seconded by Chris Corchiarino. All were in Favor.

**B. Video Lottery Terminal Fund Manager - RFP**

Video Lottery Terminal Funds are distributed throughout the state. Commerce asked Susan if she would be interested in managing a loan program for small minority businesses in the upper shore region. There are eight fund managers in the state. Susan is requesting permission to research the RFP. If she feels the program is manageable and can put together a good application, she would come back to the board and ask permission to apply.

Chairman Fithian requested a motion for Susan to move forward and research the RFP, and report back to the board, preferably by April. A motion was made by Jackie Gregory and seconded by Bob Meffley.

**C. Rural Economic Development Fund – Interest Income**

The \$10 million received from the RMEDF is earning 2% interest (\$16,000) a month. Susan asked for a subcommittee to research a way to invest some of this money in a way that would earn more than 2%. The board asked Susan to do the research, and report back to the board.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. SB396/HB1229 USRC Voting Membership:**

Councilwoman Jackie Gregory updated the Executive Board reporting that the Senate Bill updating the USRC statute with Charter Government and Council language where needed as it pertains to Cecil County, as well as changing the voting membership to reflect the addition of the County Executive, will be heard in the Finance committee on February 21, 2023, and that the HB had not been scheduled yet. Cecil Council is sending in a letter of Support. Director Susan O'Neill stated that she will be testifying in person in support of the changes.

**b. CTE Scholarships Update:**

Janice Palmer reported on the recent success of the CTE Equipment Scholarships. There have been twenty-six awards made to fifteen male, and 11 female students. Awards range from \$85-\$511.00, for a total of \$6500. Awards have been made in all three counties (Cecil, Kent, and QA's) across programs such as Automotive, Culinary, Health Occupations, Teaching and Welding.

**c. Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Update:**

Our notification of awards are a little late but going out very soon. Susan will be scheduling meetings with each of the counties to discuss Memorandums of Understanding, timelines, and drawdown of funds.

**V. TREASURERS REPORT**

Susan asked if there were any questions regarding the financial report. Having none, Chair Fithian requested a motion to accept the Financial Report. Jackie Gregory motion for acceptance and it was seconded by Jack Wilson. All were in favor.

**VI. PRESENTATION**

Chair Fithian presented an inscribed pen to both Chris Corchiarino and Bob Meffley for serving as Chair for two years each. Susan thanked them for both their time and support over the last four years.

**VII. UPDATES**

Jackie Gregory mentioned a lack of representation of rural counties at the Wednesday MACo Legislative Meetings. She asked that rural counties plan to attend next Wednesday for a vote in support of a police accountability bill.

Todd Mohn attended a meeting regarding the A. F. Whitsitt Center, an inpatient residential program for substance abuse disorders, and the need for Mental Health Support on the upper shore. He reported that Brooklane, a mental health provider, is looking to expand and USRC would be a help in facilitating this regional support. Jackie Gregory suggested forming a coalition of eastern shore counties and each write a letter to the Secretary of Health supporting the expansion of Brooklane in support of meeting the mental health needs of those on the eastern shore. USRC was also asked to write a letter.

Ron Fithian reported that Kent County has hired a lobbyist to help with the financial mandates set forth by the Kirwan Commission/Blueprint for Maryland. Kent County will have to raise taxes in order to fund the mandates as they exist now.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further discussion, Ron Fithian requested a motion for adjournment. Jack Wilson provided a motion, and Bob Meffley provided a second. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Palmer  
USRC Executive Assistant