



UPPER SHORE Regional Council

FULL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MACo Summer Conference, Powell Convention Center, Ocean City

August 18, 2023

Council Members in Attendance:

Ron Fithian (Chair) Kent County Commissioner
Chris Corchiarino (Secretary) Q.A.'s County Commissioner
Bob Meffley (Treasurer) Cecil County Councilman
Jack Wilson (2nd Vice Chair) Queen Anne's Commissioner
Jackie Gregory (1st Vice Chair) Cecil County Councilwoman
Al Miller, Councilman, Cecil County
Rebecca Hamilton, Cecil County Councilwoman
Patrick McLaughlin, Q.A.'s County Commissioner
Albert Nickerson, (3rd Vice Chair) Kent County Commissioner
Donna Culberson, Cecil County Councilwoman
Jim Moran, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County

Partners & Guests:

Dave Culver, Cecil Council Manager
Danielle Hornberger, Cecil County Executive
Nancy LaJoice, Sr. Director, Commerce
Jamie Williams, Economic Development Director, Kent
Heather Tinelli, Economic Development Director, Queen Anne's
Charlotte Davis, Executive Director, Rural Maryland Council
Rebecca Clark, Economic Development, Queen Anne's County
Connie Dean, Economic Development, Queen Anne's County
Todd Mohn, Administrator, Queen Anne's County
Megan D'Arcy, Rural Maryland Council
Dan Schneckenburger, Exec. Director, Workforce Investment Board
Bill Sorenson, Director, Economic Development, Cecil County
Shelley Heller, Administrator, Kent County

Staff:

Susan O'Neill, USRC Executive Director
Maureen O'Shea Fitzgerald, Grants Program Manager
Janice Palmer, USRC Executive Assistant

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chairman Ron Fithian welcomed everyone opening the meeting at 12:00 pm. Susan O'Neill conducted a roll call, Shelly Heller held proxies for Don Sutton and John Price. A quorum was declared. Each meeting attendee received a packet containing the Meeting Agenda, January 4, 2023, Full Council Minutes, June 28, 2023, Executive Board Meeting Minutes, a copy of Senate Bill 396- Economic Development – Upper Shore Regional Council – Membership, Bylaws of the Upper Shore Regional Council as of March 23, 2017, and a 2023 Roster of Full Council Members.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A.** Chair Fithian requested a motion to approve both the January 4, 2023, and June 28, 2023 Full Council and Executive Board Meeting Minutes. Jackie Gregory motioned approval. Bob Meffley provided a second. All were in favor.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. USRC By-Laws – Change to Voting Membership

Director Susan O'Neill reviewed Senate Bill 396, granting the Cecil County Executive membership and one vote to the USRC Full Council. The Cecil County Council membership will be reduced to two member representatives, and two votes rather than three. As a result, the USRC By-Laws need to be updated to reflect the change. Jackie Gregory motioned that the USRC By-Laws should be updated to reflect the new legislation and board membership. Bob Meffley provided a second. All were in favor.

B. Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Review

- a. Jamie Williams, Director, Kent County Economic Development reviewed Kent's three projects, all three projects have completed MOU's. They are waiting on comments from the State Highway Association regarding the Chestertown Business Campus entryway onto Rt. 213.
- b. Heather Tinelli, Director, Q.A.'s Economic Development gave a brief update saying that most MOU's have been completed, the 4H Park is ready to begin major renovations, the Career Centers at the High Schools have begun hiring and will be ready at the opening of the new school year. The expansion of the Marine Trades at Chesapeake College is also nearing completion.
- c. Bill Sorenson, Director, Cecil County Economic Development stated that construction is underway for the new I-95 interchange.
- d. Bob Meffley, Cecil County Councilman reported that several construction contractors walked away from bidding on the Farm Museums construction of an ADA compliant bathroom and small community kitchen because of the state requirement for bonds. The Farm Museum continues to reach out to contractors. He also stated that the PARIS Foundation is working with the town of Elkton and the State regarding storm water management issues. They are hoping to break ground next month.

- e. Maureen O’Shea Fitzgerald, USRC Grants Manager reviewed the online forms distributed to all grant recipients. She highlighted the ease of the reports, how data was collected by USRC, analyzed, and reported to the Department of Commerce. Demographic Forms were also reviewed. Eight of these quarterly reports are expected over the term of the Fund. Councilwoman Jackie Gregory asked if these reports and or progress of the programs would be placed on our website. Maureen and Susan both acknowledged that this would be a good idea and taken it into consideration.

C. CTE Website

Susan O’Neill reported that a Career Technology Education Website has been planned and will soon be implemented. Stakeholder meetings have finished, an RFP was published and USRC received over 40 proposals. USRC has scheduled a meeting with its top choice, once interviewed USRC will announce the winner.

Councilwoman Rebecca Hamilton and Dan Schneckeburger volunteered to work on a subcommittee to review the content of the website.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Whitsitt Center

Chair Fithian updated the Council on the plans for the Whitsitt Center to house an adolescent crisis center. The Center has been taken off of the state divestiture list, and four million dollars has been allocated to help with infrastructure renovations. Six counties on the eastern shore will be working together to support the Whitsitt Center, Chair Fithian suggested forming a workgroup modeled similarly to the Chesapeake College County Committee.

Commissioner McLoughlin requested that a letter be sent to the Department of Health saying that all six counties are in support of the adolescent crisis center and prefer to keep the center under local jurisdiction. Susan was asked to contact the Mid Shore Regional Council for coordination of a meeting, preferably to be held directly after the September 20th USRC Executive Board meeting. A Commission/Council member from each county should make up the workgroup.

B. Community Development Pilot Program

Susan explained a new Community Development Pilot Program being rolled out this year. All municipalities will be invited to participate in a virtual meeting scheduled for September 13, 2023, at noon. The program will provide a consultant to help with strengthening grant applications for Main Street status, façade projects, tourism, Arts & Entertainment qualifications, etc.

V. UPDATES

Attendees were invited to share county updates:

- Jack Wilson (Kent County) stated that summer bridge traffic has been difficult to deal with for all QA County residents.
- Jackie Gregory reminded everyone that Great Wolf Lodge is open for business and that the Maryland 5* is scheduled for October 19th-22nd, 2023. Jackie also requested that the eastern shore counties work together with Director Ortez, Maryland Environmental Service to organize an expert panel regarding dredging behind the

Conowingo Dam. Legislative Services recommended that Governor Moore remove funds from his budget, however he may be waiting for the EPA to recommend best management practices.

- Bob Meffley reported that Cecil County is in need of Sanitarians. County Executive Danielle Hornberger reported that she just received permission from MDE to bring Health Department (state employees) Sanitarians and bring them under County Government Employment. The County will now house Sanitarians who will approve perk and septic permits.
- Ron Fithian reported that a developer has received the ok from Kent County to allow a distribution center to add additional height (previously excluded) to building plans to house robotics. The developer will employ 150 people in each of two planned buildings.
- Shelley Heller provided an update on the Rural Coalition Subcommittee of Maryland Association of Counties. Rural counties are concerned with the upcoming financial requirements of the Blueprint for Maryland. This will become one of the main initiatives for MACo during the upcoming Legislative Session.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Susan O'Neill asked that all board members remain after the meeting for a photo to be used on the USRC website and 2022-23 Impact Report. With no further discussion, Ron Fithian requested a motion for adjournment. Jack Wilson provided a motion, and Rebecca Hamilton provided a second. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Palmer
USRC Executive Assistant