



UPPER SHORE Regional Council

EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Chestertown Visitors Center and Virtual

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June 28, 2023

Council Members in Attendance: Bob Meffley (Treasurer) Cecil County Councilman

Virtual Attendance: Jackie Gregory (1st Vice Chair) Cecil County Councilwoman
Chris Corchiarino (Secretary) Q.A.'s County Commissioner
Jack Wilson (2nd Vice Chair) Queen Anne's Commissioner

Partners & Guests: Todd Mohn, Administrator, Queen Anne's County (virtual)
Shelly Heller, Administrator, Kent County (Ron Fithian proxy, in person).

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

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

First Vice Chair Jackie Gregory welcomed everyone, and opened the meeting at 4:14 pm. Each board member received a packet containing the Meeting Agenda, February 15, 2023, Executive Board Meeting Minutes, Staff Report and the proposed FY24 Budget, as well as copies of thank you notes from Kent HS CTE students.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Councilwoman Jackie Gregory requested a motion to approve the February 15, 2023, Executive Board Meeting Minutes. Jack Wilson motioned approval. Bob Meffley provided a second. All were in favor.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Introduction of Grant Program Manager Maureen O’Shea Fitzgerald

Director O’Neill thanked the Queen Anne’s Human Resources team for their help in creating a job description, advertising the new position, and onboarding of Maureen O’Shea Fitzgerald as the new USRC Grant Program Manager for the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund.

B. Staff – COLA & Pay Increase

Director Susan O’Neill explained a change to the agenda to reflect the addition of a closed meeting should the Board members decide to discuss a yearly COLA for USRC employees.

Susan reviewed last year’s process, and the increases each county (Cecil, Kent, and QA’s) provided for their employees. Susan also noted that it was brought to her attention that a review of her contract states that she should be providing a review of her accomplishments for the year. Susan can provide the report within a week if one is requested.

Shelly Heller motioned to go into closed session to discuss USRC pay increases. A second was provided by Bob Meffley. All were in Favor. The USRC staff left the room.

After discussion and return of USRC employees to the conference room, Board members reported that there will be a 4% COLA for Susan and Janice. The Board members requested a special meeting in September to discuss changing the By Laws to standardize the process of staff raises, COLAs based on the CPI, and longevity with a cap. Susan is to bring examples of compensation for each of the four other Regional Councils.

C. FY24 Budget Presentation

Susan was happy to report that funding for FY24 will remain the same as last year, Commerce will provide \$200,000 and the Rural Maryland Council will provide \$600,000. The FY24 Budget will remain very similar to FY23, continuing the success of the Ag Grants, the Career Technology Education Equipment grants, and MARBIDCo funding. Cecil County is requesting new funding for a technical assistance grant to be created in the same manner as the Ag Grant. The ESRGC has asked for funding from each Regional Council to create an Ag Dashboard to assist farmers with required paperwork.

Councilwoman Gregory asked for a motion to accept the proposed FY24 Budget. Jack Wilson motioned. Chris Corchiarino provided a second. All were in Favor.

D. MACo

Susan asked the board members if they would like to hold a Full Council meeting at the MACo Summer Conference. Discussion followed on the pros and cons of holding the

meeting at the conference. It was decided that the meeting should be held this summer. USRC staff will work with MACo staff to provide the accommodations. Councilwoman Gregory asked for a motion to hold the Full Council Meeting at the MACo Summer Conference. Chris Corchiarino motioned. Jack Wilson Seconded. Bob Meffley provided one nay.

E. 20th Anniversary Full Council Meeting

USRC will host a Full Council Breakfast Meeting at the Chester River Yacht Club on Wednesday, October 11, 2023. USRC will be recognized for its 20th Anniversary.

F. Impact Report

USRC staff are working on the 2022-23 Impact Report. Board members were invited to join a committee to provide direction and or content.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. SB0396/HB1229-USRC Voting Membership

The above-mentioned bills were written to address the voting membership of USRC Board Members. The bills reflect the change of government in Cecil County giving one vote to the Cecil Executive and changing 3 Commissioner votes to two Council member votes. Although this becomes official on October 1, 2023, it will not be implemented until December 2023 when the Executive Board holds their election.

B. CTE Scholarship Update

The Career Technology Education Equipment Grant has provided close to \$10,000 to 40 students. Commissioner Wilson is working with Connie Dean to host an event showcasing students who have signed with local businesses upon graduation, much like a graduating athlete signs with a college. It was suggested that USRC also work with Connie on the event.

C. Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund

Susan reviewed processes put in place prior to hiring Maureen. USRC worked with Kathy Bosin a local consultant to work on milestones and timelines for each of the 25 projects. Susan met with attorney Chip MacLeod to write MOUs needed for each project. Maureen reported that since joining USRC she has met with many of the program managers, implemented most of the MOU's, made drawdown schedules, request forms, a demographic form and will send her first report to Commerce on Friday, June 30, 2023.

D. CTE Website

Susan reported that we have been working with Platinum PR to interview stakeholders regarding the parameters of a CTE Website. We worked with the Kent County Procurement Officer to write an RFP for a website design. The RFP was disseminated out and closed last Friday, June 23, 2023. Proposals are now being analyzed. Hopes are to have a website up and running by December of 2023.

E. Log Study

USRC provided grant money to the University of VA to implement a study on logs using vacuum steam technology. The study was a success and was published.

F. Maryland 5*

USRC has been awarded tickets as part of their sponsorship of the Maryland 5*. Any board member wishing to receive a ticket is asked to reach out to Susan.

V. UPDATES

A. Staff Report

Susan asked if there were any questions regarding the staff reports. There were none.

B. County Updates

QA's: Commissioner Jack Wilson reported that Q.A.'s hosted Governor Wes Moore for an Ag Tour of the County. The visit highlighted the need for land preservation and that Ag was the number one industry in Maryland. Commissioner Wilson asked all USRC Board Members highlight the rural counties whenever in the presence of the new Governor and his Administration.

Kent: Commissioner Nickerson also stated that the visit with the Governor went very well. Shelley Heller noted that Governor Moore along with his cabinet visited and met with Kent County Department Heads and Municipal Leaders. There were many one-on-one meetings and great connections established.

Cecil: Bob Meffley reported that Governor Moore would be attending the Grand Opening of Great Wolf Lodge on Friday. Cecil will be funding two new schools, North East Middle School and North East High School. The FY24 Budget allows for raises for all Public Safety personnel. Bob also mentioned the new ruling regarding Excelon, may again have an impact on the Conowingo Dam and dredging of the basin behind the Dam. Mr. Meffley will be working with the General from Aberdeen Proving Ground regarding the dredging spoils. Councilwoman Gregory mentioned the funding obtained for the Whitsitt Center and getting it off the Divestiture List. Todd Mohn sent a letter to the Secretary of Health and Human Services supporting the funding and encouraged Cecil and Kent to send one also. Kent's was sent already, and Cecil's is being drafted.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Jackie Gregory 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 6:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Palmer
USRC Executive Assistant

