

Tri-County Council
for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland
Serving Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

Tri-County Council Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2017

Merrill Lockfaw, Chair, called the meeting of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland to order on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at the Tri-County Council Multi-Purpose Center in Salisbury at 1:35 p.m.

Voting Members in attendance: Jerry Boston, Somerset County; Bob Culver, Wicomico County Executive; John Cannon, Larry Dodd and John Hall, Wicomico County; Bud Church, Ted Elder and Joe Mitrecic, Worcester County; Dennis Williams, Princess Anne Town Council; Muir Boda, Salisbury City Council; Esther Troast, Pocomoke City Council;

Non-Voting Members in attendance: Laura Hurley, Wicomico County Council Administrator, Mindie Burgoyne, Maryland Department of Commerce.

Mr. Boston had Mr. Charles Fisher's, Mr. Randy Laird's, Mr. Craig Mathies' and Mr. Rex Simpkin's proxies.

A quorum was present.

Staff in attendance: Mike Pennington, Kristie Eberly, Brad Bellacicco and John Donegan.

Guests in attendance: Bunky Luffman, Eastern Shore Representative, Office of the Governor.

Old Business

A. Shore Transit Update – Brad Bellacicco

Work has begun on the summer fixed route schedule.

The new medical transportation software is making the scheduling of Origin to Destination (OTD) passengers easier. About 200 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) customers are being moved each day.

Shore Transit has asked the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) for a 5% increase in operational funding for FY2018.

There are 44 buses in the fleet including the five new medium size buses. The five new medium size buses will be converted to dual gas and propane by the end of the month.

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MTA has completed the small bus contract and Shore Transit will be receiving eight buses. Shore Transit, in conjunction with the Worcester County Commission on Aging (WCCOA), has asked MTA if WCCOA buses can be used to help with the demand for OTD transport.

Shore Transit has 92 employees of which 55 are drivers and plan to hire 3 or 4 more drivers for the summer season. All drivers are now wearing yellow vests for safety.

Shore Transit's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) plan has been approved by MTA.

B. "Taste of the Eastern Shore" Legislative Event – Kristie Eberly

The 2017 "Taste of the Eastern Shore" Legislative Event was held on February 9 at the Loews Hotel in Annapolis. There were 20 Regular Sponsors, which is an increase over 2016, 17 Blue Sponsors and 2 Whale Sponsors. There were 7 individual tickets purchased. There were about 400 people in attendance and the total cost of the event was \$36,994.74. The 2018 "Taste of the Eastern Shore" Legislative Event will be on February 8, 2018, and new sponsors are always welcome.

C. Update on Legislative Items – Mike Pennington

The Tri-County Council sent a letter in support of the Sprinkler bill. This bill just had its first hearing.

The Highway User bill is still working its way through committees.

The Payment in Lieu of Taxes bill came out of the Senate committee with amendments and there is no bill filed in the House of Delegates.

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) is in the Governor's budget at \$4 million. The House of Delegates' Appropriations Committee may have reduced it to \$3 million but this has not been confirmed yet.

New Business

A. Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) – Mike Pennington

In FY2017 all five of the rural regional councils received \$111,133 in funding through the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF).

The Tri-County Council funding was used to partner with the Mid-Shore Regional Council to fund the development of both an agriculture and rural healthcare dashboard by the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Center (ESRGC). ESRGC has been working with March 15, 2017

the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service and Farm Bureau on the Ag Dashboard. The Healthcare Dashboard includes economic development statistics. Both dashboards will be demonstrated at the Tri-County Council meeting in June.

The Tri-County Council also funded Summer Youth Employment programs in all three counties which employed an additional 25 youth.

Project Opportunity, which is a veteran entrepreneurship training program, received funding to update their website and create brochures and Shore Transit's Free Rides for Veterans program received funding to pay for rides.

B. FY2018 Budget – John Donegan

We have not yet gotten confirmed FY2018 funding information from most of the funding sources. The budget that was distributed to Tri-County Council members is level funding or slightly increased. A final budget with confirmed funding will be distributed to Tri-County Council members for the June meeting.

C. Revolving Loan Fund – Mike Pennington

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) Rural Development Center has been running a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program for about 20 years. They decided to terminate the program at the end of 2016 and return the funds to the original sources.

The Economic Development Directors for the three counties felt that the absence of this program would leave a gap in the financing available to new and existing businesses in the region that cannot always qualify for traditional lending programs. They asked if the Tri-County Council would take the existing program and run it. When asked, UMES was not interested in transferring the program, only terminating it. The Economic Development Directors then asked if the Tri-County Council would start a RLF.

Salisbury/Wicomico Economic Development (SWED) currently has a small RLF and Maryland Capital Enterprises (MCE) is a fund manager in the area but does mostly loans of \$50,000 or less. The demand in the region is \$2-\$3 million.

Mr. Pennington discussed the proposal with the Tri-County Council Chair and they decided to investigate the options available to capitalize a new RLF for the region. The Maryland Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) funds are available and don't have the initial requirements, such as matching funds, that some other programs have. VLT funds will be available after the General Assembly session ends in April.

Mr. Pennington asked the Tri-County Council if they would approve starting a RLF and applying for VLT funds to capitalize it.

Following discussion, on a motion from Mr. Mitrecic, seconded by Mr. Dodd, the Tri-County Council unanimously voted to approve starting a RLF and applying for VLT funds.

D. 2017 Citizenship Award – Merrill Lockfaw

Nominations for the 2017 Citizenship Award need to be submitted by the end of June. The Executive Board will choose the recipient at their July meeting and the Citizenship Award will be presented at the Tri-County Council meeting in September.

E. TCC Regional Healthcare and Technology Committees – Merrill Lockfaw

Two standing committees, Regional Healthcare and Technology, of the Tri-County Council currently do not have Chairs. If no Tri-County Council members are interested in chairing these committees the committee members will be asked for volunteers. Mr. Dodd will Chair the Regional Healthcare Committee and Mr. Boda will Chair the Technology Committee.

F. Tri-County Council 2017 Goals – Merrill Lockfaw

Chair Lockfaw sent a letter to each of the three counties at the beginning of the year asking for suggestions of goals for the Tri-County Council for 2017. There were no suggestions submitted or brought up for discussion.

Other Business

At the request of the Tri-County Council, Mr. Pennington asked the State Highway Administration (SHA) to dedicate highways in honor of former Delegate Norman Conway and Somerset County native Donnie Drewer. The entire Salisbury Bypass will be dedicated in honor of Delegate Conway and Route 413 will be dedicated in honor of Mr. Drewer. Both dedication ceremonies will be scheduled for this summer.

Mr. Boda informed the Tri-County Council that the City of Salisbury has applied to be the site of a national folk festival. If selected, Salisbury will be the festival site for three years.

There being no further business, on a motion by Mr. Mitrecic, seconded by Mr. Church, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.