

CAROLINE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

STATE LEGISLATIVE BILL REQUESTS; ISSUES AND CONCERNS



2015 SESSION OF THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The County Commissioners of Caroline County
Larry C. Porter, President
Wilbur Levensgood, Jr., Vice President
Daniel J. Franklin, Commissioner

December 16, 2014

Legislative Request #1: Fire Police

Action requested: Introduce legislation to move Caroline County from one section of law governing Fire Police to a section that is more practicable.

State Law to be Amended: ACM, Public Safety Article, § 7-302 (remove Caroline)
ACM, Public Safety Article, § 7-303 (add Caroline)

Background:

Fire Police are volunteer fire company members who are enabled by law to provide special support to police and firefighting agencies at the scene of significant incidents. The presence of Fire Police allows firefighting and law enforcement agencies to focus on the emergency response, thereby increasing both the effectiveness of the response and on-scene safety.

Examples of tasks which Fire Police can be empowered to perform at accidents, fires, or other significant incidents include to securing equipment, performing traffic and crowd control, and setting up road closures and detours. Fire police may also assist with missing person's searches, parade details, security, and other miscellaneous tasks that support police and fire response.

The Fire Police is a volunteer organization that is attached to a volunteer fire company. Fire Police members are not sworn sheriff's deputies and only have the authority to aid and assist with specific non-law enforcement tasks outlined in State law. However, when assisting law enforcement, they are under the direction of the state or local police. This requires them to essentially be given deputy sheriff status, under the provisions and limitations in the State law.

Fire Police are often longtime members of the volunteer fire companies who are no longer able to meet the taxing physical requirements of active firefighting. However, these individuals continue to have a strong desire to serve their community and their knowledge of emergency response and on-scene incident management can be utilized in the position of Fire Police.

Discussion:

The Caroline County Sheriff's Office has requested the Caroline County Commissioners pursue a legislative change regarding the use and operations of "Fire Police" in Caroline County. Currently the law governing Fire Police for Caroline County is found in the Maryland Code – Public Safety §7-302. The current law under this section restricts the use of Fire Police to only three members per fire company. It also does not allow Fire Police to operate in towns that have their own police departments. The restrictive nature of this section has prevented the County from starting a Fire Police program.

Sheriff Bounds, the Caroline Police Chief's Association, and Caroline Volunteer Fireman's Association all agree that a Fire Police program would be far more useful and effective in Caroline County if it were to fall under Maryland Code – Public Safety §7-303, which is the law governing Fire Police for Wicomico, Worcester, Kent, and Dorchester Counties. Section 7-303 is much more descriptive in specific uses of the Fire Police, allows each fire company to have up to 12 members designated as Fire Police, and allows the Fire Police to operate within municipalities that have police departments.

By switching Caroline County from the Public Safety §7-302 to §7-303, Caroline County would be able to start a functional and effective Fire Police program that would benefit all the public safety agencies in the County.

Legislative Request #1: Draft Changes to State Law

PUBLIC SAFETY

TITLE 7. FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITIES SUBTITLE 3. MEMBERS OF FIRE COMPANIES APPOINTED AS DEPUTY SHERIFFS

§ 7-302. Appointment of members of fire companies as deputy sheriffs -- Baltimore, [Caroline,] Cecil, Dorchester and Queen Anne's counties

(a) Scope of section. -- This section applies only to Baltimore County, [Caroline County,] Cecil County, Dorchester County, and Queen Anne's County.

(b) In general. -- The sheriff of a county subject to this section may appoint as deputy sheriffs members of fire companies, whether volunteer, career, incorporated, or unincorporated, to exercise the powers of deputy sheriffs at fires and while going to and from fires.

(c) Designation by commanding officer. --

(1) The commanding officer may designate three members of the fire company to be appointed as deputy sheriffs.

(2) The commanding officer may be one of the three members designated under this subsection.

(d) Appointment by sheriff. --

(1) (i) [Except in Caroline County, t]The sheriff of a county subject to this section shall appoint as deputy sheriff a member of the fire company designated under subsection (c) of this section on request of the designated member.

[(ii) In Caroline County, the Sheriff of Caroline County may appoint the designated member as deputy sheriff.]

(2) A request for appointment shall be accompanied by a written certificate of designation signed by the commanding officer.

(e) Powers. --

(1) Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this subsection, a member of a fire company appointed as deputy sheriff under this section may exercise the powers of deputy sheriffs at fires and while going to and from fires.

(2) The powers of members appointed as deputy sheriffs do not apply and may not be exercised in a municipal corporation that maintains an organized police force.

(f) Termination of appointment; removal; replacement. --

(1) The appointment of a member of a fire company as deputy sheriff terminates if the member ceases to be a member of the fire company.

(2) The sheriff of a county subject to this section may remove a member appointed as deputy sheriff at any time for just cause.

(3) If a member appointed as deputy sheriff dies, resigns, is dismissed, refuses to serve, or is unable to serve, the commanding officer may designate another member of the fire company to be appointed as deputy sheriff.

(4) [(i) Except in Caroline County, i]If the commanding officer designates another member of the fire company to be appointed as deputy sheriff, the sheriff of the county shall appoint that member as deputy sheriff, subject to subsections (d) and (e) of this section.

[(ii) In Caroline County, the Sheriff of Caroline County may appoint the designated member as deputy sheriff.]

PUBLIC SAFETY

TITLE 7. FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITIES

SUBTITLE 3. MEMBERS OF FIRE COMPANIES APPOINTED AS DEPUTY SHERIFFS

Md. PUBLIC SAFETY Code Ann. § 7-303 (2014)

§ 7-303. Appointment of members of fire companies as deputy sheriffs -- Allegany, **CAROLINE**, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Kent, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties

(a) Scope of section; applicability of § 7-302. --

(1) This section applies only to Allegany County, **CAROLINE COUNTY**, Carroll County, Cecil County, Dorchester County, Frederick County, Harford County, Kent County, Somerset County, Wicomico County, and Worcester County.

(2) Except as modified by this section, the provisions of § 7-302 of this subtitle apply to this section.

(b) Designation by commanding officer. --

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the commanding officer may designate 12 members of a fire company to be appointed as deputy sheriffs.

(2) In Cecil County and Harford County, the commanding officer may designate 20 members of a fire company to be appointed as deputy sheriffs.

(c) Training. --

(1) The sheriff of a county subject to this section may require a member of a fire company appointed as deputy sheriff to demonstrate a satisfactory level of training in those areas of law enforcement commensurate with the duties of deputy sheriff described in this section.

(2) If the sheriff requires demonstration of a satisfactory level of training, then the sheriff must provide the training, at a time and place that the sheriff considers suitable.

(d) Powers. --

(1) The powers of members of fire companies appointed as deputy sheriffs under this section are limited to those necessary to perform the duties of deputy sheriffs while functioning at:

(i) parades;

(ii) accidents;

(iii) floods;

(iv) other emergencies; or

(v) public events conducted by or under the auspices of a fire company or the sheriff's department.

(2) The powers authorized under this subsection may be exercised:

(i) in a municipal corporation, subject to the discretion and control of the chief of the police force of the municipal corporation;

(ii) in other areas of the county; and

(iii) on State roads, subject to the discretion and control of the Department of State Police.

(3) A member appointed as deputy sheriff is deemed to be performing the duties of deputy sheriff when on duty and wearing a badge of authority.

(4) A member appointed as deputy sheriff may not use a weapon in the performance of duties authorized under this subsection.

(5) In Allegany County, Carroll County, Frederick County, and Harford County, a member appointed as deputy sheriff may also perform traffic control for public functions held by a municipal corporation, group, or committee on request for and approval of the services by the sheriff.

(e) Chain of command. --

(1) (i) A member appointed as deputy sheriff performing the duties of deputy sheriff in an emergency situation to which a fire company or ambulance company has been dispatched by the Allegany County Emergency Management Center in Allegany County, the Frederick County Central Alarm Board in Frederick County, or the Carroll County Emergency Operations Center in Carroll County, is subject to the authority of the commanding officer of that fire company or ambulance company.

(ii) If a member appointed as deputy sheriff is not a member in good standing of the fire

company or ambulance company that has been dispatched, then the member may not perform the duties described in this section.

(2) A member appointed as deputy sheriff performing the duties of deputy sheriff at a public event conducted by or under the auspices of a fire company or ambulance company is subject to the authority of the commanding officer of that fire company or ambulance company.

Legislative Request #2: Sunday Hunting

Action requested: Introduce legislation to add Caroline County to the list of counties where the hunting of game birds or mammals is permitted on Sundays during the open season for the animal.

State Law to be Amended: ACM, Natural Resources Article, §10-410(a)(8)(i)

§10-410(a)

(8) (i) This paragraph applies only in Allegany County, **CAROLINE COUNTY**, **DORCHESTER COUNTY**, Garrett County, and Washington County.

(ii) The Department may allow a person to hunt any game bird or game mammal, except migratory game birds and wetland game birds, on a Sunday during the open season for that game bird or game mammal on:

1. Private property, subject to § 10-411 of this subtitle; and
2. Public land that is designated for Sunday hunting by the Department.

Discussion:

Caroline and Dorchester Counties have many avid sportsmen and hunters, most of whom work hard during the week. Under the current law, they cannot hunt game birds or mammals on Sundays. Allowing Sunday hunting during the season for these animals will increase the opportunity for local hunters to enjoy this much loved outdoor activity.

Outdoor recreation – including hunting – is also an important part of the tourism economy for both Caroline and Dorchester. Increased opportunities for hunting will help to provide additional revenue for businesses that provide goods and services to hunters.

Several other counties have already been given authority to allow hunting on Sunday for these animals. Additionally, Sunday hunting is already permitted for deer and turkey. It simply does not make sense to continue such antiquated blue laws.

Dorchester County has requested to be included in this legislative request, which the Caroline County Commissioners support.

Legislative Request #3: Allow Local Amendments to Sprinkler System Requirement of *Maryland Building Performance Standards*

Action requested: Introduce legislation to allow counties to adopt a local amendments to the *Maryland Building Performance Standards* regarding sprinkler system requirements.

State Law to be Amended: ACM, Public Safety Article, §12-504

Summary:

On January 1, 2012 the State adopted the 2012 edition of the International Residential Code (IRC) as part of its building performance standards. The IRC required fire sprinklers in new homes. However, Maryland state law allowed local jurisdictions to opt out of any provision of the building standards, except for provisions having to do with energy conservation and efficiency.

On May 2, 2012 Governor O'Malley signed HB366/SB602 into law, which prohibit local jurisdictions, with specified exceptions, from adopting local amendments to the *Maryland Building Performance Standards* if the local amendments weaken automatic fire sprinkler systems provisions. This bill added another paragraph that would not allow local jurisdictions to opt out of the residential sprinkler standards contained in the International Residential Code (IRC). The law's only exception is for homes that don't have electricity, which was included to accommodate the Amish population in Maryland. Local jurisdictions are not able to "opt out" of the requirement. This law became effective October 1, 2012.

Effective April 2, 2011, Caroline County adopted a local amendment which provided for an option to install a residential sprinkler system – provided the applicant for a building permit submit a signed and notarized Sprinkler Notification Form that indicates that the seller disclosed the estimated cost of installation and the buyer intends to exercise the option to install a sprinkler system to improve the life and safety of the occupants and to reduce property damage from fire.

Maryland Law, Public Safety Article, Section 12-503, requires the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) to adopt through regulation the latest version of the International Building Code (IBC) with any modifications as the Maryland Building Performance Standards (MBPS). The MBPS applies to all buildings and structures constructed within the State. Local jurisdictions are authorized to adopt amendments to MBPS to suit local conditions. **The State will adopt the 2015 International Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings effective January 1, 2015.** Local jurisdictions will have six (6) months following the effective date to adopt any local amendments which again, cannot weaken the automatic fire sprinkler system provision.

Discussion:

The State has adopted, through both legislation and regulation, a number of provisions that have substantially increased the cost of building new homes, effectively placing the dream of home ownership out of reach of many citizens in Caroline County. One such measure is the sprinkler system requirement described above.

The installation of a sprinkler system in a residential home can add anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to the cost of building a new home. When the average per capital income of a Caroline County resident is \$25,300 – more than 30% lower than the statewide average – any increase in cost is significant. Additionally, we are now seeing instances where the cost of building has gotten so high due to such requirements, that new homes will not appraise for close to the cost to build.

Further, sprinkler systems are largely property protection devices – not lifesaving ones. Research has shown that the most important lifesaving device for fires is a functioning smoke detector, not a sprinkler system. While sprinkler systems may be necessary in multifamily dwellings or more densely populated areas where the spread of fire to other residences is a legitimate risk, this is simply not a significant risk in the unincorporated areas of the county, which feature much larger lot sizes.

Research shows that the positive social benefits from homeownership and stable housing are compelling. There is evidence from numerous studies that demonstrate that homeownership boosts the educational performance of children, induces higher participation in civic and volunteering activity, improves health care outcomes, lowers crime rates, and lessens welfare dependency.

Given the societal benefits of homeownership, any policy measure that makes this more difficult should be carefully weighed. For this reason, the County Commissioners feel strongly that installation of a sprinkler system should be a matter of personal choice for residents.

Legislative Request #4: Bond Bill for Phase II Renovations of Old Caroline High School

Action requested: Sponsor a bond bill for \$200,000 to help fund Phase II of renovations to the Old Caroline High School, home of the Chesapeake Culinary Center.

Matching Funds: \$425,000 (\$375,000 hard match, \$50,000 soft match)

Background:

The Old Caroline Schoolhouse is owned by the Town of Denton and leased to the Caroline County Board of Education for 99 years. The site is operated by the Chesapeake Culinary Center, a grassroots non-profit. This building represents a unique partnership across many agencies and areas of responsibility and serves as a true community center, bringing together education for all ages, business and economic opportunity, historic preservation, and environmental sustainability. The Chesapeake Culinary Center has a sound business plan that will allow the fully renovated structure to be a self-sustaining operation, ensuring the program's ability to serve the community.

Discussion:

Bond bills are an effective way for the State government to return taxpayer funds to specific local capital projects. The bond bill process is common-sense way to fund these expenditures, because each project is presented to the House and Senate Committees separately and evaluated on its merits. Projects funded by bond bills are generally subject to a higher degree of legislative review than projects tucked away in the capital budget and are a more democratic way of using tax money collected from local residents for local projects.

The Caroline County Commissioners are committed to fiscal responsibility and select one bond bill project to support each year. Unfortunately, a bond bill request for the Old Caroline High School Phase II Renovation was not funded last year, so the Commissioners are submitting the request for your consideration once again.

Project Overview:

Second Floor Renovation

- Installation of Working Kitchen
- Development of Restaurant Area and Venue Space
- Creation of Bartending/Mixology Classroom Space

Building and Grounds Work

- Installation of Geothermal Energy
- Landscaping and Installation of Outdoor Event Area

- Installation of Driveway, Parking Area, ADA/ABA Accessible Sidewalks
- Replacement of Historic Bell Tower and Bell
- Stormwater Management

Project Benefits:

- Expands training and educational space for high school culinary program and workforce training partnerships with Department of Social Services and Workforce Investment Board
- Facilitates food and nutrition programming for at-risk elementary and middle school aged children
- Supports the Commercial Kitchen Incubator, which facilitates start-up businesses and helps farmers bring value-added products to market
- Enhances culinary and agro-based tourism in the Mid-Shore area
- Increases environmental sustainability of project and reduces operating costs
- Designated Smart Site encourages smart growth and helps to stabilize historic downtown
- Increases program revenue streams and makes project fully self-sustaining

Discussion Items:

- **Support Elimination of Regulations Requiring BAT Septic Systems:** In 2013, MDE imposed a state-wide best practice mandate that established new requirements for septic systems within the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Watersheds. This mandate went above and beyond the legislative intent of the General Assembly, which sought only to require BAT septic systems in the Critical Area. The additional cost of a BAT septic system can be up to \$10,000 per system, for little additional pollution reduction benefit. In reviewing the total nitrogen loading into the Chesapeake Bay and the potential for development on septic systems in rural jurisdictions, the amount of nitrogen reduction is negligible for such a high cost. As discussed in the County's third legislative request, residents can little afford additional costs and barriers to homeownership – especially when the benefits are negligible and other less expensive options are available. The Commissioners request that the Delegation work with the Governor-Elect to roll back these regulations and only require the BAT septic systems in the Critical Area.
- **MACo Legislative Initiatives:** The Commissioners are also highly supportive of the main legislative initiatives identified by the membership of the Maryland Association of Counties. We remain actively involved with MACo's legislative efforts and believe the broad issues they have identified are of vital importance to local governments. The Commissioners ask the Delegation to support MACo as they pursue these items.

Of special importance to Caroline County are:

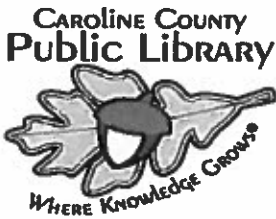
- **Transportation Funding Restoration:** The State's taking of local Highway User Revenue continues to cripple the budgets of county governments. Many new State projects, including transit, have been added into the Consolidated Transportation Plan, while local governments have continued to struggle to maintain and preserve their roadways. HUR were created to be shared with local governments, which bear the burden of responsibility for 80% of the state's roadway miles. Local property and income taxes were never meant to support these infrastructure needs and do not have the capacity to do so. The State needs to recognize the legislative intent of HUR and return to local governments their rightful share. *The cumulative impact of the loss of funding to Caroline County alone over the past few years is more than \$16 million.* Caroline County cannot hope to stabilize its budget without the restoration of these funds, which rightfully belong to the local government and the residents we serve.
- **Broad Tools to Tackle the Drug Crisis:** Drug-related deaths and addiction continue to rise in epidemic proportions. Counties in all regions need support and coordination among state and local agencies, with appropriate local flexibility, to bridge remaining gaps in service. Of particular concern to Caroline County is

uncertainty related to the State's plan to transition local addictions funding from a grant program to a fee-for-service model. The unique challenges of service delivery in a rural county, combined with our demographics and the State funding model change will likely mean the end of easily accessible and affordable addictions treatment in Caroline County. We are very pleased that MACo has made seeking comprehensive legislation and budget initiatives to address the growing drug problem a legislative priority and we expect to work very actively with them on this issue.

- **Efficient and Effective Pretrial Functions:** Counties urge the state to adopt effective measures to improve pretrial services in District Courts. A one-time \$10 million earmark to provide court-mandated counsel offers nothing more than a temporary effort. District Courts are seeing process backups, local jails face housing challenges, and counties anxiously await the unknown mid-year cost burden. An effective and efficient pretrial system requires investment in properly trained staff, improved communication technology, better tools for risk assessment, and assurances that the State will back up this new commitment. Counties urge the State to deliver a plan to resolve this vexing issue without overloading local jails with longer term pretrial holdings, or unfunded mandates to support programs or employees totally outside their control.
- **Program Open Space:** Caroline County strongly supports the preservation and protection of Program Open Space. POS is a legacy program that works and of which the State should be very proud. The funding source is the real estate transfer tax, a ½ of 1% fee based on the value of the real estate sold. The funds are shared with the State and fund both local public recreation projects and agricultural land preservation. Without POS funds, Caroline County would not have been able to develop our much used and loved parks and athletic fields, nor would we be a State leader in ag land preservation.

Program Open Space has continually been diverted by the Governor and legislative action to balance the cash needs of the State budget for the last six years. The O'Malley Administration has put forth a complicated reimbursement formula to "pay-back" the funding borrowed for several fiscal years – but it isn't working and it isn't enough. Governor-Elect Hogan was sensitive on the campaign trail to the loss of dedicated State funds for locally driven projects - specifically Program Open Space. The Commissioners request that the Delegation actively work to end the diversion of these funds, pay back what has been taken in full, and preserve the legacy of Program Open Space for the future.

- **Additional Concerns:** The County Commissioners request your support for funding of the following programs, all of which significantly benefit Caroline County. Please see the attached documents for additional information.
 - State Library Capital Grant Program
 - Rural Regional Councils (Specifically, Mid-Shore Regional Council)
 - Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund



November 6, 2014

Dear Caroline County State Legislators:

On behalf of the Board of Library Trustees for Caroline County and my staff, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support of the Caroline County Public Library and all Maryland public libraries.

In particular, I would like to thank you for your continued support of the State Library Capital Grant program. The new formula now makes it more possible for poorer counties like Caroline to move forward with needed capital projects. We could not have accomplished some of our past capital projects without this state match. With this funding match, we were able to replace a flat roof at the Central Library and install new windows, exterior doors, and new carpet at our Federalsburg Branch in 2008. We were also able to build our Teen Zone at the Central Library in 2010.

I would also like to thank you for your support to increase the per capita dollar amount for Maryland Public Libraries beginning in fiscal year 2016.

Here are some of our highlights that should interest you -

- As of July 1, 2014 we were able to re-open our Central Library Tuesdays and Thursday mornings. The feedback we've received from our customers is very positive.
- We are very proud of our STEM programming for our youth. We hold regular Minecraft events and LEGO building events and added several STEM related programs to our Summer Reading Program this past summer. We also enhanced our Central Library's Teen Zone with music development equipment. We are about to begin a Code in Libraries STEM program for children through the funding support of the Division of Library Development and Services.
- We continue to work with job seekers on a daily basis, teaching them computer skills, assisting them to locate and apply for jobs and write resumes. We also partner with DLLR staff to provide workshops for job seekers using our newly enclosed and re-furnished Computer Training Lab at the Central Library.
- Recently we began a Teens Teach Seniors Tech Mentoring Program, where teen volunteers work one-on-one with seniors to help them master technology. It provides a meaningful volunteer experience for our teens and is highly popular with our seniors, who are desperately trying to stay up with today's technology.

Please check out our new web page: <http://www.carolib.org>. Along with subscribing to our monthly electronic newsletter, our website is a good resource to help you and your staff stay informed about our services and activities.

Again, thank you for all your support.

Sincerely,

Debby Bennett
Executive Director

info@carolib.org • www.carolib.org

Central Library
100 Market Street
Denton, Maryland 21629
p 410.479.1343 f 410.479.1443

Federalsburg Branch
123 Morris Avenue
Federalsburg, Maryland 21632
p 410.754.8397 f 410.754.3058

North County Branch
101 Cedar Lane • P.O. Box 334
Greensboro, Maryland 21639
p 410.482.2173 f 410.482.2634

Mid-Shore Regional Council
(1 of 5 rural regional councils in the State of Maryland)

The Governor is being asked to **fully fund the five rural Regional/Tri-County Councils** to the historical legislative intention of **\$200,000 each** in the FY2016 budget (**a total investment of \$1,000,000** that will benefit 15 rural counties).

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) operates as a cooperative regional planning and development agency within Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties to foster physical, economic, and social development. The Council initiates and coordinates plans and projects for the development of human and economic resources.

The MSRC is a federally designated Economic Development District (an economically distressed area) which enables federal funding to the region through the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

The MSRC is a two person operation with a total annual budget of less than \$275,000.

MSRC total operating income from FY05 to FY14 was \$2,127,879

MSRC leveraged other funds from federal, state, and private sector from FY05 to FY14 totaling \$13,366,940

- **The funds have been used to support several regional projects**
 - Broadband Infrastructure
 - Small Business Development
 - Ag/Resource-based Industries
 - Technology Parks
 - Public Transportation
 - Project Green Box
 - GIS (Geographic Information Systems) support to local governments
 - GeoDASH Initiative

- **Jobs Created or in the process of being created and Retained** as a result of the MSRC efforts
 - 1,063 jobs
 - \$1,138 per job (for the State investment of \$1,209,690)

Over the past decade the **Mid-Shore Regional Council** has been able to produce the above outcomes, and much more, with only partial State funding. Unfortunately, it **can no longer continue to deliver these critical economic development activities without receiving the intended \$200,000.**

Notes:

- 1) The counties of Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot have always met their state statutory requirement of \$10,000 per year per county.
- 2) The state has never met its requirement.
- 3) The Council also receives federal operating funds of \$70,000 per year.
- 4) For the past two years the Council has received state operating funds of \$150,000 per year.

Recently the Mid-Shore Regional Council worked to assist Talbot County and the Town of Easton in successfully applying for a \$1.65 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to build infrastructure to the new Regional Medical Facility. **These funds would not have been accessible without the existence of the Mid-Shore Regional Council, an EDA recognized Economic Development District.**

* There are four other rural regional/tri-county councils in the state that do similar work in their jurisdictions. The councils also work together on several initiatives.

The Governor is being asked to fully fund these councils at \$200,000 each
(\$1,000,000 total state investment).

Will you **FUND** the **ASPIRATIONS** of Rural Maryland

Rural Maryland has the State's:

- ✓ highest unemployment rates
- ✓ highest poverty levels
- ✓ lacks transportation options
- ✓ lacks health care providers

Rural Maryland has **ASPIRATIONS**:

- ✓ to address its needs
- ✓ to remedy its challenges
- ✓ to make life better for its residents

Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund:

- ✓ legislated in 2006
- ✓ targeted investments to regional, nonprofit, education aspirations
- ✓ has **NEVER BEEN FUNDED**

FY2016 Proposed Budget Line Items

L00A12.18 - Rural Maryland Council
General Fund Appropriation\$167,000

L00A12.19 - Maryland Agricultural Education
and Rural Development Assistance
Fund
General Fund Appropriation\$167,000

L00A12.20 - Rural Maryland Prosperity
Investment Fund
General Fund Appropriation\$6,000,000

Examples of Aspirations that could be funded under the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund

Entrepreneurship

- Support the Veterans Entrepreneurship Training Opportunity with the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
- Support Lower Eastern Shore Job Training
- Support the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) through *Shore Venture* entrepreneur training,
- Expand the hotDesks network of coworking spaces
- Continue the Eastern Shore Business Competition, feeder to InvestMaryland Challenge
- Expand the Eastern Shore Revolving Loan Fund Portfolio
- Advance increasing growth in manufacturing to include innovation and new product development
- Execute an accelerator program on the Eastern Shore focused on manufacturing and meaningfully unique new products

Infrastructure

- Work to help connect rural Maryland households so that the **327,990 school-aged children** will have reliable internet connectivity enabling children to use school-provided technologies to complete their required school assignments and that all **175,693 rural senior or persons with disabilities** will have reliable internet connectivity for tele-health services and to order door-to-door delivered medications.
- Provide assistance to **24 municipal governments**, many of which have no full time staff by hiring one new, full time planner to address the cycle of infrastructure development applications and projects, fill existing gaps at the municipal level to bring our towns to parity with the rest of the state and nation.
- Support the Internet Broadband Capacity Expansion Task Force in Southern Maryland
- Invest in our GIS capacity at the regional level so that we may assist our very small municipal governments where there are currently gaps in service.
- Fund the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) to:
 - continue to **map the broadband availability in Maryland** at the census block level, tracking the change over time and leveraging existing infrastructure to expand connection opportunities,

- maintain the **Maryland Broadband Map** for Maryland's citizens and businesses, allowing them to determine their broadband provider choices,
- persist in building broadband capacity by working with citizens and businesses in Western, Southern, and Eastern Maryland to identify connection opportunities, cost savings, or grant applications,
- expand **mapping and data visualization services** to farmers and other rural entrepreneurs through a proposed partnership with the Maryland Agricultural Extension Service,
- enable rural Marylanders to prepare for likely storm surge scenarios through specific flood depth mapping and mitigation measures' impacts,
- continue to **support our Emergency Management community** with tools and techniques to better prepare for and manage a variety of disaster scenarios.



Healthcare

- Continue the EARN/WIA Healthcare Training Program Expansion implemented by the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland
- Support the State's two Area Health Education Centers which help create, recruit and retain health care workers
- Support healthy meal preparation and incentivizing SNAP dollars at farmers markets
- Develop rural Obesity awareness and fitness programs such as after school training programs for youth

Regional Planning and Development Council assistance

- Create the **Summit Development Corporation** to support and increase local capacity to enhance business development.
- Assess regional structures as they exist today to determine readiness to fulfill the requirements to become a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)
- Provide **over 1,000 free bus rides for veterans** every month
- Support Shorevines.com (training tool for new vineyard and winery startups) to increase the numbers of vineyards and wineries in the state; **3 new wineries/tasting rooms in the Upper Shore Region with 4 more in the pipeline**
- Support **Chesapeake Wine Country**, a new marketing initiative to promote the Chesapeake wine trail to tourist and locals
- Implement **Workforce Development Planning Forums** bringing together key stakeholders to re-design training and services to close the match gap between employers' skilled talent needs and those seeking
- Support **Shore Gourmet**, a food business development initiative of the Mid-Shore Regional Council to promote and sustain the food and agricultural value-added businesses located on Maryland's Eastern Shore by providing focused assistance to start, grow and diversify regional value-added products. Shore Gourmet would continue to assist with product development, which ranges from the maturation of a new product concept to product testing to improvement of existing goods.

Rural Maryland Council/Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF)

- Support the Maryland Farmers Market Association adding **10 farmers' markets in 5 rural counties** and boosting sales for farmers
- Create the Western Maryland Buyer Grower Network **increasing sales for farms**
- Develop the **Indian Heritage Trail** based around the discovery Fort Zekiah built in the 1600's which will be a significant addition to the heritage and tourism of Maryland.
- Continue agro-tourism development by the **Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission** which has been a force to develop innovative agricultural programs like the Corp-Hop Bicycle Farm Tour and Maryland winery businesses in Southern Maryland, additional funding would expand these programs to increase their regional visibility and participation.
- Expand the Upper Shore Harvest Directory to enhance **480 businesses**, provide technical assistance to Shore agri-businesses resulting in the **retention or creation of 720 jobs**.



**ASPIRE Campaign
for Rural Maryland**

Rural Maryland Council
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(410) 841-5772 • rnc.mda@maryland.gov • www.rural.maryland.gov