



To: Susan Summers, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

From: Greg Bowen, Rural Economies Workgroup Chair

Subj: Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities

Date: July 19, 2017

The Rural Economies Workgroup met on July 14th to review the progress of its subcommittees (Sustainable Food and Food Production, Sustainable Forestry, Land Preservation and Protected Open Space, Rural Development and Recreation, and Sustainable Fisheries). See below the “Workgroup Agenda and Notes Document” that summarizes the status of each subcommittees’ efforts. The next meeting of the full Workgroup is July 14.

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup Agenda and Notes Document	
Meeting Notes For:	Rural Economies Workgroup
Date and time:	July 14, 2017 @ 1 pm
Called by: Chuck Boyd	Facilitator’s Name: Chuck Boyd
Attendance:	Michael Bayer, Chuck Boyd, Elliott Campbell, Debra Celnik, Nevin Dawson Jason Dubow, Steve McHenry, Jim Mullin, Dan Rosen, Dan Ryder, Matthew Tefteau
Notes Taken By:	Chuck Boyd
Agenda and Notes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance – 12 members attended in person or by conference call. 2. Mr. Boyd briefed the Workgroup on the status of Growth Commission and its upcoming scheduled meeting in Princess Anne, MD on July 24. 3. Status Report on the five (5) Subcommittees by each facilitator highlighting items discussed and future actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Rural Development and Recreation Subcommittee (Deborah Carpenter facilitator) Mr. Boyd reported for Ms. Carpenter that the Subcommittee met once on July 11 to continue its review and prioritization of Reinvest Maryland recommendations. The Subcommittee has identified 16 recommendations, two from each category, and is finalizing its rankings. The Subcommittee also identified recommended legislative priorities to present to the Reinvest Maryland Workgroup. The attached letter to this report summarizes the Subcommittee’s efforts to this point and suggested legislative priorities for the Growth Commission to consider advancing for next legislative session. See the attached summary minutes from the one meeting for more details. 	

B. Sustainable Food and Food Production Subcommittee (Dan Rosen facilitator)

Dan Rosen reported that the Subcommittee's next meeting is in August where they will continue their work on the directory of food processors and the analysis of livestock producers versus processors.

C. Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee (Jason Dubow/Elliott Campbell facilitators)

DNR Forest Service is taking the lead in pursuing the following two projects, with support from the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee as needed. (Dan Ryder reporting):

- New standards for controlling erosion and sedimentation from timber harvest operations went into effect July 1. It appears that the entire logging force has successfully completed the updated training certification.

Field days were held in each region of the state to demonstrate and discuss how the new standards are to be implemented. These were overwhelmingly attended by the industry and agencies. A primary issue that consistently dominated the concerns of the industry is that of providing clarity to Waters of the State policy. Specifically, the industry remains unsure of how these site features will be identified and subsequently regulated. More work is needed to ensure that all parties have confidence that everyone has the same understanding of identifying WOS and the standards for their protection.

To aid with that, DNR and MDE are exploring a MOU enabling and defining a proposed new role for the Forest Service: to work directly with loggers on each timber harvest to ensure a common understanding of how to implement WOS protections. This model works very well for our neighboring States.

The MOU is currently under review by the AG offices of DNR and MDE. We hope to have a draft proposal for broader review soon.

- Meanwhile, Charles SCD offered to pilot an amended process to address improving the timeliness of permitting. Essentially, a landowner has the option to submit a permit package for the normal review, and the SCD would perform a 'Review for Technical Sufficiency'. The landowner would receive a letter documenting the application meets requirements at time of review. When the landowner, at a future date, decides to actively market the timber, a formal issuance of the permit would then be provided. This amended process would allow the landowner to know with certainty which trees could be harvested and to know in advance of any constraints that would be in place. It also allows all potential bidders to know with certainty the same. Having that knowledge in advance is helpful for both sellers and buyers; however, the even bigger benefit will be the ability for nearly instant transacting a timber sale. It would entirely remove the delay between negotiating the sale of the timber and receiving government approval to harvest. Plus, it would remove before bidding of any uncertainty about which trees can be harvested, seasonal restrictions and any special harvest modifications that are often conditional for approval.

This pilot is 'on hold' while the MOU between DNR and MDE is being finalized. It is probable that subsequent additional review from MDA will augment the draft proposals for both items discussed above.

D. Land Preservation and Protected Open Space Subcommittee (Dan Rosen facilitator)

The Subcommittee has not met since the last Workgroup meeting, and there is no update on Subcommittee activities.

E. Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee (Chuck Boyd facilitator) Mr. Boyd reported that no Subcommittee efforts took place.

4. Next Workgroup meeting is Sept. 8 at 1 pm at MDP's Olmsted Conference Room in Baltimore.

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup – Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee Minutes	
Meeting Notes For:	Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee
Date and time:	July 11, 2017
Called by: D. Carpenter	Facilitator’s Name: Deborah Carpenter
Attendance:	Deborah Carpenter, Jim Mullen, Joe Rogers, Les Knapp, Diane Chasse, Charlotte Davis, Chuck Boyd and Joe Griffiths
Notes Taken By:	Deborah Carpenter
Minutes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The meeting began with Debbie reviewing the purpose and strategies of the group, emphasizing that the detailed work we just completed was strategy #1 and the other two strategies encompass our next tasks. 6. Debbie gave a synopsis of where our group is in relation to the ReInvest MD group, as well as discussing the broad topic areas where the ReInvest MD groups’ short list of recommendations overlap our groups list of recommendations. 7. Debbie relayed that due to timing issues the ReInvest MD group has chosen to focus on those issues that may require legislative action and she recommended that we do the same. Of the list of 16 recommendation priorities that our group has chosen Debbie saw two that could require legislative action and they are Vision #1c and Finance #1. 8. While the group agreed with that assessment, Les felt that Vision #1c is too vague. Fin #1 could be crafted into legislation but references to new funding sources need to be eliminated and the focus should be on c and d within that recommendation. 9. It was decided that Debbie would draft a letter to the ReInvest MD group that included (1) a synopsis of the broad topic areas that overlap between our work and theirs, (2) the specific recommendation suggested for legislative action and (3) a mention of the importance adding flexibility to, improving and streamlining current regulations and processes. The letter will be sent to the group for review. 10. The group next discussed process for prioritizing the rest of the 16 recommendations. Debbie reintroduced the concept of a survey of rural officials to ensure our priorities align with what is needed, but expressed concern about aligning our timetable with the ReInvest MD group. Les suggested meeting with the MACo Rural Counties affiliate at the MACo summer conference in August. He will approach the group to see if we can speak to them at that time. 11. It was also decided that the group members would use the broad topic areas that the two groups overlap on to prioritize the rest of the recommendations. 12. Chuck informed the group about the sidebars within the new ReInvest MD document and the need to have good examples of projects, success stories and lessons learned from the rural counties be included in the document. He is sending the group the link in Dropbox that contains the current list of sidebars. 13. Next Subcommittee meeting is August 10, 2017 	
Key Actions to be taken prior to next meeting	Describe action and indicate when action is due
1.	Debbie will draft a letter to the ReInvest MD group as described above.
2.	Les will speak with the MACo Rural Counties affiliate about a meeting.
3.	Chuck will send the group a link to the sidebars in Dropbox.
4.	All will edit the draft letter when received and prioritize the rest of the recommendations.
Resource Materials used and draft documents	- List of 16 top recommendations after prioritization



RURAL DEVELOPMENT & RECREATION SUBCOMMITTEE Rural Economies Workgroup

Jessica Zuniga, Chair
ReInvest MD Workgroup
Sustainable Growth Commission
c/o MD Dept of Planning
301 W. Preston St, Suite 1101
Baltimore MD 21201

Dear Ms. Zuniga,

The Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee is a subcommittee to the Rural Economies Workgroup. We reconstituted in December of 2016 and established the following purpose and strategies for our work over the next year.

Purpose: To improve Maryland's smart growth model to better address rural land use and economic development needs, and the economic wellbeing of rural communities

Strategies:

1. Investigate ReInvest Maryland to identify opportunities to enhance reinvestment efforts in rural communities.
2. Create specific recommendations to improve rural reinvestment opportunities, including identifying funding mechanisms, responsibility for actions and accountability.
3. Identify pilot projects that could serve as a model for broader efforts where appropriate.

As you can see, our mission and the mission of the ReInvest MD Workgroup closely align, and we have worked diligently throughout this year to review the ReInvest MD document, searching specifically for those initiatives that will most greatly benefit rural communities. As we have narrowed our focus and kept abreast with your Workgroup's efforts, we have found 5 main areas where our work aligns. We see these areas as the basis for the formation of recommendations that we will more fully detail during the remainder of this year and in years beyond. Those areas are:

1. Addressing the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure
2. The need for technical assistance
3. The need to aid small businesses
4. The need for infrastructure and development funding, whether it be new sources, redirecting existing sources or more reliable sources
5. (a) Enhancing communication and coordination between agencies & with the applicant during the development process, as well as (b) improving, adding flexibility to and streamlining regulations and processes.

We are aware of your Workgroup's current focus on recommendations that may need legislative action in order to bring them to fruition. We have discussed what sort of recommendation would align with your efforts and would offer the following suggestion which combines parts of a previous recommendation within ReInvest MD with additional suggestions germane to rural areas of the state.

Recommendation:

To accelerate reinvestment, the Governor and General Assembly must better direct existing funding to support infill, redevelopment and revitalization.

- a. Provide for flexible funding for community projects, operations, capacity building, etc. for community development organizations.
- b. Expanded opportunities to use Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) at different scales by using state revenues to support TIF, providing more flexible authority to use local revenues to support TIF, allowing area-based and pay-go TIFs, structuring small-scale TIFs that are more affordable for smaller jurisdictions, and allowing TIFs to be used for a broader range of activities, including mitigation of costs related to regulatory compliance.
- c. Expanded uses for funding for predevelopment and operating costs

In addition, though we understand that such a task is beyond the scope of the current timetable for the upcoming General Assembly session, we feel strongly that every effort should be made to examine current laws (such as Priority Funding Areas, the Forest Conservation Act, stormwater regulations and building code requirements) in an effort to find opportunities to introduce flexibility. Laws sometimes have unintended consequences, certainly when applied equally to areas that do not have equal need or capacity. We believe that honestly examining those laws and being open to making minor changes that will address the unintended consequences, will only serve to enhance that law and make it more beneficial for all residents of the state of Maryland. We would be interested in participating in any effort in this regard that may occur in the future.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to comment. As we carry on with our work to produce actionable recommendations concerning infill, redevelopment and revitalization within rural areas, we look forward to continuing the valuable dialogue between our groups.

Sincerely,

Deborah Carpenter, Chair
Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee