

Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc.
Annual Report

Pursuant to Maryland Annotated Code, Local
Government Article §22-113

Submitted December 30, 2023

Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc. Annual Report 2023

History

The 2020 Maryland General Assembly passed enabling legislation that authorized a local government to create a Resilience Authority that would mitigate the impacts of climate change through infrastructure investment and the legislation was codified in Title 22 of the Local Government Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. In December 2020, the Board of Charles County Commissioners passed a local law establishing the Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc. that was subsequently codified in Chapter 299 of the Charles County Code.

Mission

The Resilience Authority of Charles County, Inc. (“Resilience Authority”) is a government instrumentality, nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with Charles County communities and County Government to identify, finance, and implement nature-based solutions that enhance everyone’s ability to understand and respond to the impacts of climate change. In 2023, the Charles County Resilience Authority Board of Directors hired its first Executive Director, established its mission and vision statements, and a Five-Year Strategic Plan (2023-2028) that prioritizes nature-based solutions and equity. Recognizing that the risks of climate change are not shared equally, the Resilience Authority’s actions prioritize the most vulnerable communities, and its vision is to set a national example of environmentally sustainable and equitable climate resilience that is continuously grounded in diversity, inclusivity, and environmental justice.

Board Members

The Authority Board Members were appointed by the Charles County Board of Commissioners and reflect the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of Charles County. The composition of the Board includes members of the Charles County Government Executive Leadership Team (ELT), members who represent a Charles County municipality and the business community, a Charles County citizen, a member from the banking and finance industry and Ex-officio members including a representative of a Maryland State Government entity focused on the environment and infrastructure issues and a member from the climate change science community.

This year the Authority continued to establish and self-manage itself. The by-laws were updated and clarified to reflect the Resilience Authority’s status as a government instrumentality with independent nonprofit status. As a result, the Board of Directors has independent authority to elect its Officers and Board members, apart from Charles County Government ELT members. Charles County government executive leadership Board members are appointed by the Charles County Board of Commissioners. The Authority also approved an additional Ex-officio position for a member of the Soil Conservation District of Charles County.

Membership

Craig Beyrouty
Bonnie Norman
Dr. Charles C. Glass, P.E.
Ryan Hicks
Patrice Kelly
Tom Schueler
Jenifer Ellin
Dave Nemazie
Daniel Donohue
Teresa Ball
Martin Harris
Timothy Wells

Term Expires

Until June 25, 2023
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2023
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2025
Until June 25, 2023
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2024
Until June 25, 2025

Meetings

The Board of Directors met virtually each quarter throughout the year.

Briefings

- **Water Resources–Jason Groth, Acting Director of Planning and Growth Management**
Presented on Charles County Government water resources as well as current, planned, and future conservation tools.
- **UMCES Coastal Adaptation Report Card - Katie May Laumann, Science Integrator**
Presented regular project updates to the Authority to develop a resilience report card assessing the preparedness of Charles County communities for climate change and sea level rise events, modeled after the first-ever Coastal Adaptation Report Card for the State of Maryland, developed by UMCES, which gives a snapshot of current adaptation status in Maryland’s coastal zone, and establishes a framework for measuring future progress.
- **Southern Maryland Conservation and Development (MD RC&D)-Allison Burnett, Caroline King and Denitra Brawner**
Presented a summary of their work to the Authority which included an assessment and shoreline management plan, partnering with local governments and agencies, land conservation, and wildlife management.
- **Potomac Riverkeepers – Dean Naujoks**
Dean Naujoks briefed the board on Potomac Riverkeepers concerns over contamination surrounding the Morgantown Power Plant. Mr. Naujoks suggested that MDE be brought into the conversation to discuss the consent decree for remediation of the property to include contamination issues.

- **Charles County Climate Resilience and Sustainability Officer Update, Beth Groth**
Responsible for facilitating different initiatives within county departments to increase resiliency and sustainability and overseeing training. This position is also responsible for working on the County's Climate Action Plan.

Climate action planning continues to develop through continued coordination with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments consultant team. The plan has two focus areas: Government Operations and Community-Wide Resilience and Mitigation.

Policies and Procedures

- Standard Operating Procedures were adopted:
 - Budget Policies & Delegated Authorities
 - Procurement Policy

Personnel Updates

- **Executive Director Position**
The Authority, in partnership with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) developed an Intergovernmental Personnel Agreement (IPA) for an Executive Director position for the Authority. A contract between UMCES and DNR was executed for the NOAA Coastal Zone Management Grant to cover the Executive Director's salary through December 2024. The Executive Director position was filled as of January 23, 2023.

Projects

This year the Resilience Authority greatly expanded its project portfolio and is working on seven climate resilience projects in furtherance of its mission and vision:

- **Continued partnership with Charles County Government on the county-wide Residential Stormwater Drainage Improvement Program** - the Resilience Authority is pursuing federal and state funding to supplement the County's current funding to advance the goal of completing stormwater drainage improvements in all the 100 + identified neighborhoods with impaired drainage.
- **UMCES Coastal Adaptation Report Card** - The Resilience Authority has partnered with the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science to assess the preparedness of Charles County communities for climate change and sea level rise events, modeled after the first-ever Coastal Adaptation Report Card for the State of Maryland, developed by UMCES, which gives a snapshot of current adaptation status in Maryland's coastal zone, and establishes a framework for measuring future progress.
- **Development of Private Sector Financing Models for Climate Resilience Outcomes** - In partnership with the Montgomery County Greenbank, the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT), and Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), the Resilience Authority is pursuing funding to initiate a Chesapeake Bay Watershed regional study to

develop innovative private sector financing models for climate resilient environmental outcomes.

- **Establishment of Urban Tree Canopies at Charles County Schools in Urban Heat Islands** - The Resilience Authority is leading a multi-phase, multiple partnership effort to provide environmental education and green job training through planting and long-term maintenance of native urban tree canopies in the County's urban heat islands. Increasing temperatures from climate change affect everyone, and communities in urban heat islands (areas characterized by more heat-absorbing buildings and pavements and fewer cool spaces with trees and greenery) are more likely to experience heat-related illnesses and mortality, with related negative effects including poor air quality and a higher air conditioning cost burden. Multiple Charles County public schools are in urban heat islands. Well planned native tree planting and long-term maintenance of those trees build climate resilience by reducing impervious surface, providing much needed cooling, improving air quality and health outcomes, while advancing carbon sequestration and stormwater management.

This September, the Resilience Authority, in partnership with Charles County Board of Education environmental educators and the Maryland Forest Service, was awarded funding through the MDOT Urban Tree Program to plant 75 native trees at five different Waldorf area schools in urban heat islands. October tree plantings took place as part of the Charles County Fall Resilient Arbor Day Event. The Resilience Authority intends to submit another round of funding requests for additional school tree plantings in February 2024, for the Spring Resilient Arbor Day event in April. The newly established Spring and Fall Resilience Arbor Days will engage not just local school students, but also the broader community to celebrate nature-based climate resilience for everyone.

- **Formation of the Resilience Authority Youth Corps of Charles County (RAYC)** – To provide long-term maintenance of the 75 native trees planted this fall, the Resilience Authority partnered with the Student Conservation Association, www.thesca.org to form the Resilience Authority Youth Corps (RAYC). The Student Conservation Association, in coordination with the schools and Resilience Authority, has hired two Charles County high school students and a young adult to conduct a year of mentored holistic tree care - watering, soil testing, soil amendments, structural pruning, etc., - tied to Saturday green and climate resilience paid job training. This is the just the beginning of what the Resilience Authority intends to grow to engage and mentor Charles County high school students and community members to pursue nature-based solutions for equitable climate resilience.
- **Urban Flooding Remediation** - The Resilience Authority is responding to the climate challenge of increased precipitation and flooding hazards in two heavily used and chronically flooded public parking lots that lack functioning stormwater drainage in the commercial development area of Waldorf (adjacent State Highway Route 301). The flooding in this area is caused by many of the same inequitable development patterns that create urban heat islands; too much impervious surface and not enough green space that then leads to more

stormwater run-off, public safety and health hazards, property damage, and impaired water quality. The Resilience Authority is pursuing state and federal funding to replace the failing gray stormwater infrastructure with holistic green infrastructure projects with multiple co-benefits such as cooling shade, carbon sequestration, improved air and water quality, and community beautification.

➤ **Living Shoreline to restore coastal habitat, coastal resilience, and public water access -**

The Resilience Authority, in partnership with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, is pursuing a federal NOAA Coastal Zone Management grant to design a living shoreline at future Popes Creek Waterfront Park located on the Potomac River in Newburg, Charles County. The future park and surrounding area are vulnerable to sea level rise and storm surges. Moreover, the surrounding area is characterized by highly sensitive populations, a significant concentration of households below the federal poverty line and has indicators of significant climate and health equity concerns. The entire area is also characterized by lack of public beach access. The Resilience Authority's living shoreline project is intended to restore, enhance, and protect sensitive habitat, increase coastal access opportunities, improve water quality, reduce flooding and erosion, and enhance the capacity of the surrounding disadvantaged communities to respond to the effects of climate change. In collaboration with Charles County Parks & Rec, it will also support creation of the first public beach in Charles County as part of a nature-based park that will protect the natural ecosystems while providing nature-based recreation such as fishing, kayaking, bird watching and environmental education opportunities. As a key element of a county park that was conceptually developed through an inclusive community- up process, this living shoreline project will provide an important demonstration of equitable climate adaptation and resilience that reflects the needs and challenges of historically underrepresented and socially vulnerable communities.

Grants Awarded

- August 2023: Five MDOT Urban Tree Program grants through Maryland Urban and Community Forestry Committee
- December 2023: Chesapeake Bay Trust Charles County Forestry grant

Grant Proposals Submitted (Awards will be announced in 2024)

- Chesapeake Bay Trust Watershed Assistance Grant Program
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Chesapeake Bay Trust Conservation and Climate Corps Host
- The NOAA Habitat Restoration National Coastal Zone Management Grant Program

Outreach & Partnerships

Charles County Government Established and Continuing Partnerships:

- County Administrator: Mark Belton and Deb Hall
- Charles County Executive Leadership Team (County Department Heads)
- New Hope Community Outreach Services – Faith and Community Based
- Montgomery County Greenbank
- University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES)

- University of Maryland Earth Sciences
- Charles County Public Schools (CCPS)
- Charles County Soil Conservation District
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Climate Officer
- Maryland Forest Service
- The Student Conservation Association
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development Board (MD RC&D)
- Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Partnership

Compliance

The Authority remains in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation.