

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2016

Attendees: Jane Evans, Dennis Kamber, Chuck Schuster, Eleanor Leak, Dave Weitzer, Eddie Kuhlman, Doug Lechliger, Pete Driscoll, Aliza Fishbein, Linda Lewis, Patrick Jamison, Eleanor Leak

Staff: Jeremy Criss

- 1. Meeting called to Order and Introductions**
- 2. Approval of the June 21, 2016 AAC meeting minutes** (Kamber/Driscoll)
- 3. Update on the Office of Agriculture-OAG:**

The OAG began to function independently on July 1, 2016.

DED is officially closed and the Office of Agriculture is officially open and on the County's website as the first Executive agency.

We have nearly completed the moving of 14 work stations to better organize agency staff.

Jackie Arnold will move to the Derwood Office on July 25, 2016.

The FY17 Capital and Operating Budget for the Office of Agriculture-OAG are effective.

All contracts with the OAG have been executed for FY17:

Montgomery Weed Control, Inc.

The Deer Donation Program-William F. Willard Farms LLC

The Mobile Science Lab-MAEF and MCPS

The OAG staff met again with DEP on July 14, 2016-WQPC funding for Ag Preservation.

The DEP exploring how farmers can assist with the County's MS4 permit

Short-term need for MS4 is due to the delayed stream restoration and reconstruction.

Short term 1-3 year nutrient trading scenarios are being discussed.

Farmers need to ask MSCD for Baseline Assessment on their farm \$500 incentive payment.

So far about 6 farmers have requested Baseline Assessments

OAG and DEP will develop process and documents.

DEP and OAG will report back to the Council T&E/PHED Committees on October 20, 2016.

The Office of Ag is negotiating with DEP to allocate water quality protection funding for ag preservation. Jeremy and Jon Zawitoski need to calculate best management practices for installing grass water ways to determine reductions in pounds of nutrients, and assess benefits for MS4 formula including the cost to the farmer for the waterway. Farmers who want to participate in the nutrient credit program need to get a baseline assessment and then implement BMPs that will bring their farming operation further below the base line by further reducing nutrients. Hopefully the County-OAG will get some water quality protection charge money to purchase easements.

4. New Improvements and Communication Systems at the AHFP

The construction for Comcast Business Service is almost complete.
The construction needs to be redone at the bridge crossing due to the bridge being replaced.
Comcast needs to run the line under the creek instead of the foundation of the bridge.
There have been some permitting issues that have caused the work on the Comcast Business Service network to start and stop repeatedly.
The Federal network for FSA and NRSC networks have been up and down for seven weeks.
The Federal Government wants to maintain the T-1 lines that do not always work.
The Federal Government wants new voice over internet phones that can only work if their network actually works.
All phone numbers for agricultural agency staff will be the same.
The existing Verizon T-1 lines will be replaced for OAG, UM-Extension and the MSCD.
The MDA has expressed interest in migrating to Comcast Business Service for internet.
The FSA, NRCS will maintain their existing Verizon T-1 lines.
MDA has agreed to migrate to Comcast, which will provide additional funds.

5. Update on the Sugarland Road Pilot Project for Broad Band

The Comcast Company decided to build the infrastructure in the pilot area for free.
The construction schedule is pending.
There is total of 95 residents in the area that includes 15 businesses.
The AAC and OAG will begin discussions with other interested Ag Reserve communities.
We need a group of neighbors in each community that are willing to make this happen.

Comcast will build in the pilot area; the construction schedule is still pending. There are many residents and 15 businesses in that area. They anticipate the construction proposal and plan being done by July 30th. The construction will be on poles and not underground.

6. Agricultural Advisory Committee need for new farmer members

The County Executive Staff has moved forward on the appointments to the AAC.
The OAG recommended that two farmer member positions will remain vacant at this time.
The County Council is scheduled to confirm the AAC appointments on August 2, 2016.
The appointments to the AAC are as follows:
Eleanor Leak-new farmer member appointed for a first term
David Weitzer-farmer member and Farm Economist appointed for a third term
Aliza Fishbein-non-farmer member appointed for third term
Dennis Kamber-non-farmer member appointed for a first term
Eddie Kuhlman-non-farmer member appointed for fifth term

Executive staff moved forward on the appointments. OAG recommended the 2 farmer member positions be vacant. Those two vacancies were Drew Stabler and David Heisler.

There will be 10 farmers instead of 12.

Please let Jeremy know if you have any ideas of farmers who might be interested in filling the vacancies.

Of the filled positions, the Council is scheduled to confirm the appointments on August 2. Eleanor Leak will be replacing Jane Evans.

7. ZTA 16-02 Agricultural Zone-Transferable Development Rights Requirements

The ZTA has yet to be scheduled on the Planning Board agenda-The MNCPPC staff has indicated they hope to have a draft ZTA distributed to everyone by mid-September.

The OAG may be asked to provide recommendations to the DPS and the MNCPPC on all requests for farm tenant dwellings.

Jeremy reached out to Josh Penn and Jonathan Casey; they hope to have a draft ZTA distributed to everyone by mid-September. Hopefully the AAC will have a chance to testify in Silver Spring before the planning board. We have already had several meetings with planning staff to address the need for building farm tenant dwellings. OAG will have a discussion about the facts surrounding the farm, hopefully to give the two approving agencies comfort in approving building in the future.

8. 27th Annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale event-July 23 & 24, 2016

The 27th Annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale is coming up and there are 21 farms featured. All 21 farmer owners were interviewed and feature stories are posted on social media. Please see the copies of the Farm Tour Brochure.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/AgServices/agfarmtour.html>

Farm Tour Trading Cards were developed for all 21 farms-please see the set of cards. The Farm Tour Trading Cards Contest Rules and guidelines are posted.

Jeremy handed out the farm tour brochure. The farm tour is scheduled during the hottest, historically slowest, time of the year at the request of farmers years ago as promotions to get people out to farms. Jeremy passed around complete sets of the farmer trading cards – they had sent out the rules for the contest: 1st-5th place awards available for kids who collect a full set or the most number of cards.

Doug raised the question about production farms; MAP group was wondering why none are represented. Jeremy said that traditionally owners of commodity farms have not participated in the farm tour. Maybe in future years they could have up to 5 commodity farms join forces, rotate each year whose property is used, and the rest of the group brings equipment and co-host. Chuck added that they could do it at the AHFP since there's parking available. There is also a new agriculture educator at AHFP, and they could get involved in the education and demonstrate both the old and new themes of agriculture. Patrick added that they could get a combine out to the open house and allow folks to take rides on it. Chuck added that it would

show what the majority of the acreage in the County produces – could also describe cover crops and do the rainfall simulator. Jeremy was receptive to the idea, but reminded the AAC that when they had used the AHFP in the past, it was keeping the visitors from actually rotating out to the farms and they received some criticism for that.

9. County Council Proclamation-Drew Stabler-Good Steward Award-National Corn Growers Association

The County Council-George Leventhal will honor Drew Stabler of Sunny Ridge Farm for the Good Steward Award from the National Corn Growers Association. Stay tuned.

The proclamation may not be rescheduled in the Council Chambers. The latest word was that the Council would attempt to do it at the Fair at the Ag Leaders Luncheon. The challenge is George Leventhal will be out of town then.

10. Recommendations from the AAC Sub-committee:

Micro-Alcohol Production Facilities- Fruit and Grain based Alcoholic beverages.

The sub-committee has proposed Limited Use Standards for Private Events on farms.

The subcommittee work for micro alcohol facilities and limited use standards for private events. There are a number of legislative proposals to have festival events for breweries, wineries, and distilleries. The Council is very interested in submitting to the MD General Assembly when the session begins. Micro alcohol production facilities will be covered, and private events are covered by the festivals. Stay tuned for more.

11. ZTA 16-04 Agricultural Reserve (AR) Zone- Transitory Uses

The County Council approved ZTA 16-04 on July 12, 2016.
Food Trucks and Food Trailers are now allowed on Farms encumbered by TDR easements.
Please see the Letter of Support from the AAC on ZTA 16-04.

There is a letter of support from the AAC that Jeremy distributed. The Council approved the ZTA on July 12. Food trucks are now allowed on farms encumbered by TDR easements.

12. Bill 28-16 Solid Waste (Trash) Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use and Food Waste Diversion:

Please see the letter of support for the AAC for Bill 28-16.
The Public Hearing is June 19, 2016 @ 1:30pm.
Aliza Fishbein will testify at the public hearing representing the AAC to discuss the letter of support and the findings from her research.

Aliza testified on the bill on behalf of the AAC (testimony that Jeremy and Dave Weitzer reviewed and approved). All testimony, including Aliza's, is posted on the OAG website. Aliza did research on food waste and how composting can be used as effective means for recycling food waste. Aliza commented on her findings, consistent with the tone of the letter of support submitted by the AAC. There will be a work session with T&E committee, the AAC support letter from Dave says that we would like to be members of the task force to be created by 28-16. Of the 12 speakers at the hearing, all were pretty much in favor of the bill. The gist of Aliza's testimony was that the farming community would like to be collaborators, but not the sole bearers of the County's food waste composting load.

Roger Berliner originally sponsored this bill and 6 members of the Council have already signed on as cosponsors.

13. AAC recommendation on proposed changes to the State of Maryland hunting regulations:

The Montgomery Agricultural Producers-MAP has been working with the County Council and Executive staff to propose specific changes to the Maryland Hunting regulations.

The propose changes are as follows:

1. Reduced Archery Hunting Safety Zone from 100 yards to 50 yards
2. Expanding Sunday deer hunting on private lands (Going beyond the current two Sundays during the deer hunting season)
3. Extending hunting season by one month through February
4. Adding an additional week for deer hunting with a shotgun (as suggested by Bob in our call this morning)

The proposed changes are outlined in the draft letter from the AAC for consideration.

Bob Cissel, representing MAP, attended the joint work session. What came out of that were several bills for the 2017 legislative session. All hunting is governed by Maryland DNR. Montgomery County currently allows 2 days of Sunday hunting. There are two main bills, the first reduces the archery hunting safety zone (currently required 100 yards to 50 yards). Two years ago it was changed from 150 yards to 100 yards. The second bill would add 2 additional days of Sunday hunting, on private lands only. Bob Cissel also recommended that we ask MD DNR to extend the hunting season through February, which currently ends in January. This would be for many reasons including the sharp decrease in number of hunters in the state, the unpredictable weather in the fall, and that surrounded states have much longer seasons than we do (into March and even April).

The letter was accepted as written and will be sent on to Sarah Morningstar.

(Lechliden/Kuhlman)

14. Follow up on minimum wage issue

Jeremy, John Fendrick, and Chuck Schuster figured out the definition of man days, etc. in order to determine how overtime would be paid to agricultural workers.

15. Next Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting is September 20, 2016 @ 7:00pm.
Please note there will be no AAC meeting in August since it is scheduled the same week as the County Agricultural Fair.

At one of our next meetings Heather Bruskin, the Manager of the Montgomery County Food Council will talk to us about a food action plan that the Council has been working on. OAG is an agency partner. The composting bill is one of our partnerships, Heather testified alongside Aliza earlier today.

Move to Adjourn: (Kuhlman/Driscoll)