

Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee
Agenda
May 18, 2021

1. Call the Meeting to Order-Introductions:
2. Approval of the April 20, 2021 AAC meeting minutes.
3. COVID-19 Update:

Montgomery County has 46.6% of the population has received the full doses of the vaccine and 58.5 % has received the first dose.

[Data - COVID-19 Information Portal - Montgomery County, Maryland \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=35309&Dept=1)

The County Executive wants all County employees vaccinated before opening County buildings. On Thursday, the County Council and the County Executive released the announcement below.

https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=35309&Dept=1

Once the County achieves 50% of the population being fully vaccinated by June 1, 2021, we can begin to open the Agricultural Activities Center at the Agricultural History Farm Park.

We are researching data that shows progress for vaccinating all employees-UME, OAG, MSCD, NRCS, FSA etc.

The University of MD-Extension is considering the following schedule:

June	staff to return to work 1 day per week
July	staff to return to work 3 days per week
August	staff to return to work 4 days per week
September	staff to return to work 5 days per week

Telework policy ends and all employees must verify they have been vaccinated.

4. The Department of Environmental Protection Legislative Proposals:

Individual Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Systems-The proposed legislation has not been introduced. The Office of Agriculture is consulting with the DEP on the language on lines 158 to 170 as outlined below. The OAG told DEP that the wording below will result in the agricultural community opposing the legislation. The DEP responded by asking if italic wording could be retained the [bracketed] wording be deleted.

(d) Emergency authority. If the Director or the Director of Environmental Protection finds that the condition of an individual sewage disposal system presents an immediate danger to the public health or safety because of an unsafe condition or poor maintenance,

the Director may take any needed action to protect the public and make the system safe, including entering the property to make any needed repair. [The County must assess any cost incurred as a result of the Director's or the Director of Environmental Protection's actions against the owner of the system. The County may collect the costs in the same manner as real property taxes are collected against the property where the individual sewage disposal system is located. In addition, the County may seek reimbursement under any other method legally available to collect debts owed to the County.]

Introduction of Bill 16-21-Environmental Sustainability – Building Energy Use Benchmarking and Performance Standards – Amendments to Chapter 18 Environmental Sustainability. The Office of Agriculture recommends that all existing and new agricultural buildings be added to Section 18A-38B Applicability and exempt from the bill. *There is a public hearing scheduled on June 15, 2021 and the agricultural organizations should provide a letter outlining that all existing and new agricultural buildings should be exempt from this Bill 16-21.* [2707_1_14390_Bill_16-2021_Introduction_20210504.pdf](#)

Electric Lawn Care – The proposed legislation has not been introduced. The Office of Agriculture is consulting with the DEP on the scope of the legislation. The legislation proposes a Sale Prohibition and Use Prohibition starting in 2025 for residential gasoline lawn mowers with a deck less than 30 inches including gas trimmers and blowers. The legislation excludes gasoline chain saws. The legislation proposes the commercial sale and use of gasoline lawn mowers with decks less than 100 inches starting in 2027.

5. There was a meeting on Thursday May 6, 2021 for River Road residents that own property along the gravel portion of the road. Representatives from the DOT, OAG, and Rustic Roads Advisory Committee attended this meeting. The list of people that attended the meeting is attached along with the New Study that was provided. The study shows the improvements that are proposed for drainage pipes and maintenance of the gravel surface between Elmer School Road and River Road. This meeting was a follow up to the August 21, 2018 meeting that Linda Lewis hosted at her farm market that 19 River Road residents attended.
6. Follow up from the May 10, 2021 County Council Work Session on the Office of Agriculture FY22 Operating Budget. The Council recommended to restore the Maryland Matching Money- MMM program that expands the purchasing power of customers at our farmers markets; The Departments of Finance and OMB need to develop a way to address how the Matching Grant

Cost Share program reimbursements from MARBIDCO uses the OAG appropriation and when MARBIDCO reimbursements are deposited into the General Fund, this funding does not come back to the OAG; And to explore a new FTE full time position assigned to the OAG be discussed during the summer.

7. Discussion on Leaf-gro that is provided by Maryland Environmental Service that many farmers use annually as a soil amendment. The Maryland Department of Agriculture removed Leaf-gro from their approved list of organic soil amendments for organic certification because of the ink in the bags that are provided to residents for gathering leaves and grass clippings. In accordance with an agreement between the County Government and the Sugarloaf Citizens Association, the MES can only provide Leaf gro to be delivered in 40-yard tractor trailer trucks that small scale farms cannot accommodate.
8. Stepped up Basis for American Family Farms:
<https://www.fb.org/advocacy/action-alerts/protect-stepped-up-basis-for-American-family-farms>
9. MD Farm Bureau and MCFB Farmside Chats:

Food Resiliency - Tuesday, June 8th at 9:30 AM - Butler's Orchard

Livestock Processing & Grain Farming - Thursday, July 1st at 9:30 AM - Seneca Ayr Farm

Deer Damage - Thursday, August 5th at 7 PM - Jamison Farm

Forest Banking - Wednesday, September 8th at 9:30 AM - Willard Family Farm

Ag Reserve Solar - Wednesday, October 6th at 9 AM - Rockhill Orchard

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-May 18, 2021

Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors- June 1, 2021 7:00 pm

Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-June 8, 2021 7:00 pm

Montgomery Soil Conservation District-June 11, 2021 9:00 am