

**Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 17, 2023**

**Attendees:** Doug Lechluder, Jane Evans, Pete Driscoll, Ben Butler, Patrick Jamison, Lori Larson, Amanda Cather, Eleanor Leak, John Brewer, Tim McGrath

**Staff:** Greg Wims, Jeremy Criss, Natalia Salazar (Business Development at OAG), Kelly Nichols (Extension Agent for Montgomery County), Chuck Schuster

**Guests:** Ellen Gordon, Tim McGrath

**Call the meeting to Order-** 7:02 pm

**Approval of the November 15, 2022, AAC minutes-** *Please note that the Agricultural Advisory Committee did not meet in December 2022.*

Accepted as corrected (Evans/Leak)

**Bill 40-21- Individual Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Systems - Amendments** (McCartney-Green)

*During the October 24, 2022, Transportation and Environment Committee work session several questions were raised that DEP staff did not have all the information. We are monitoring the County Council for another T&E Committee work session to be scheduled.*

No updates here.

**Bill 18-22 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments-**

*This Bill 18-22 Noise Control-Leaf Removal Equipment was introduced on June 21, 2022, and the Public Hearing was on September 20, 2022. Some of the agricultural groups remitted letters to the County Council opposing the Bill 18-22 which prohibits gasoline leaf blowers. The T&E Committee work session is scheduled for February 13, 2023, at 9:30 am.*

OAG will be participating in the work session. Noise control is less of an issue in the AR Zone than down county.

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220920/20220920\\_9.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220920/20220920_9.pdf)

**Office of Legislative Oversight on the Status of TDRs and BLTs -**

*The Draft Office of Legislative Oversight-OLO report was remitted to the County Administrative Officer and the CAO responded back to OLO staff. The Council is supposed to approve the release of the report this Tuesday. There is a Planning Housing and Parks work session tentatively scheduled for February 13, 2023 at 1:30 pm.*

***The findings from this report shows that the County Government and MNCPPC have not proposed new receiving capacity for TDRs since 2012. The findings also show that the imbalance of TDRs in the sending area -4,565 TDRs is more than three times higher than the total TDR capacity in receiving areas-966 TDRs. The OAG is hopeful that the new Planning Board and new County Council will help to address the imbalance of TDRs that has existed since the program began and take the necessary actions to get the TDR program back on track.***

Today the County Council approved the release of the document. We have a great opportunity to work with the new Council and Planning Board. The Ag Reserve was created 43 years ago, and the TDR program was developed to compensate for value lost from the downzoning. It's important to educate leaders about the history of the program. It's a private sector investment into farmland preservation. TDRs are a density tool for growth management and smart growth. The TDR program is nationally known!

**UME Staff updates-**

***Chuck Schuster is serving as the Acting/Interim Area Extension Director that Rick Walter held. Three candidates applied for the Area Extension Director and Presentations were held on January 4, 2023.***

Kevin Atticks is the new Secretary of Agriculture. He's a professor at Loyola College. He started as the Executive Director of the Maryland Wine Producers Association then the Maryland Beer Association. He created a non-profit called Grow and Fortify that promotes value added, farm alcohol production, and ag tourism businesses. He's a great spokesperson for agriculture.

***Interviews for the candidates that applied for the Master Gardeners administrative position replacing Linda Walters were held on December 21, 2022, and several candidates are promising.***

There is a hire, which will be announced shortly.

***The 4H Agent Associate position that Santana Mays held was posted and on October 28, 2022, and the applicants are under review.***

***University of Maryland Extension is seeking to fill ten (10) Tech Extension Educator/Navigator positions, with one position at each of the following county Extension office locations:***

- ***Central Maryland (1 position in Montgomery or Howard County)***

***Jeremy does not know where this position will be assigned Montgomery or Howard County?***

There is no update yet.

**FY 23 Operating Budget for the OAG:**

***The BDS position that Kristin Fisher once held was offered to Natalia Salazar and she accepted the position and will be starting with the OAG later this month.***

*The MSCD Engineering Position-Technical assistance on small ponds was posted twice. The OHR is allowing the MSCD to interview on January 20, 2023, the one candidate that has applied.*

**Update on the FY22 Farm to Food Bank-F2FB Program-**

**There are 25 applications from participating farmers to the capacity building grants program (up to \$10,000) for the third year of the program. There are 18 applicants that will receive Grants and funding for the 2023 growing season.**

32 farmers total have participated. This year they gave a few extra points to applicants who had applied previously and not received any funds. Once all the MOUs are signed the Manna Food Center can distribute the funds to the farmers to install the equipment by August. The money will be remitted before the end of this month.

**Update on the New County Council for 2023**

**The leaders of the Agricultural Groups met with the six new Council members on Tuesday. Please see the attachment with the agricultural issues that were discussed.**

*Evan Glass, President*

*Andrew Friedson, Vice President*

*The Planning Housing and Economic Development-PHED Committee has been split up. Outlined below you will see the County Council Committees and its members.*

*Planning, Housing and Parks-Andrew Friedson, Chair, Will Jawando, Natali Fani-Gonzales  
Economic Development- Natali Fani-Gonzales, Chair, Marilyn Balcombe, Laurie Ann Sayles,  
Evan Glass*

*Government Operations-Kate Stewart, Chair, Andrew Friedson, Sidney Katz*

*Public Safety- Sidney Katz, Chair, Dawn Luedtke, Kristin Mink*

*Education-Will Jawando, Chair, Gabe Albornoz, Kristin Mink*

*HHS-Gabe Albornoz, Chair, Laurie Ann Sayles, Dawn Luedtke*

*T&E-Evan Glass, Chair, Kate Stewart, Marilyn Balcombe*

Agriculture community representation were Doug for AAC, Mike Scheffel for APAB, Todd Greenstone for MCFB, Michael Jamison for APAB and Bob Cissel for MAP.

Doug was impressed with the new Council members. Doug said we have some council members that are interested in agriculture. There were productive conversations. Jeremy Criss reported that a former 4H student Caitlin Gardner is now a Legislative Aide to Councilmember Dawn Luedtke.

**Article on the Wells #2 and #3 in Poolesville taken offline because they detected Forever Chemicals-These wells are located towards the center of town and in residential areas.**

**There was a meeting on Monday, where the Agricultural Leaders discussed the attached map of the Town of Poolesville wells and developed a proactive strategy moving forward. Please the attached agenda from this meeting including the recommendation from the OAG.**

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/investigations/toxins-in-poolesville-drinking-water/65-292eae8d-f798-4203-8b55-496bdf3a28e2>

**Here is another article regarding the WSSC Bloom product containing PFAS.**

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/05/25/pfas-pfos-forever-chemicals-garden-fertilizers/7418828002/>

In August, MDE continued to do random testing of public municipality water systems. The test in Poolesville there are 13 total wells. The results were published in December. The town of Poolesville sent out a notice to residents of the town and scheduled a community meeting on January 3, 2023. The tests detected PFAS components. PFAS started in the 40s when we developed polymers, plastics, resins, polyester, carpeting, clothing (stain resistant), fire retardant foam, Deicer for planes and other products. Of the 13 wells, wells 2 and 3, which are some of the oldest wells in the town. A total of 25% of the water the town consumes comes from these two wells. These two wells have been offline since the test results came back. The two wells are located in the center of the town surrounded by residential and commercial development.

On January 3rd they held a town meeting. At the meeting, there was a scientist explaining what science there is out there and what additional science needs to be done. The town is going to try to install some charcoal filtering system to see if they can get the compounds out of the water in the wells, and hopefully before summer as demand for water increases.

Blue Drop- a subsidiary of WSSC markets and sells Bloom which is a bio-solid digested product. Marketed to horticultural businesses and farmers as commercial fertilizer. There are farmers following the rules that use either animal based manures or they may purchase Bloom and as long as they apply it according to their nutrient management plan, they are following the rules.

Jeremy organized a meeting on Monday of ag leaders. He included the agenda in our packet, and various links for more information. Next steps – on Jan 26, Bloom has a webinar. Jeremy scheduled a follow up meeting on February 7, 2023, with Bloom representatives and members of the ag community and agricultural agency staff. Jeremy is asking anyone in the County using Bloom or other Bio-solids to temporarily suspend their use of it. This would be voluntary suspension of its use to demonstrate that we're aware of the issue and taking it seriously. Doug Lechlinder said this is a complex issue that will not be solved overnight. Aliza Silver said that PFAS is in wax coating on coffee cups and fire fighting chemicals that it will take a lot of time to fully research this issue.

EPA is planning to announce something soon. These chemicals are in so many different products. Ellen said that PFAS is coming from other sources and not just Bloom. Ellen said the Sierra Club has conducted PFAS testing, and she suggested we go to folks other than Bloom

representatives to learn about the possible impacts of their product. Doug Lechluder said the difficult issue is there is no guidance from EPA at this time other than the Health Advisory for drinking water. Amanda asked about the wells at the edge of the Town and why there was no PFAS detected in them.

### **Agricultural Trainings and Workshops**

**Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training – Full details can be found here: [registration link](#)**

**Date: Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Time: 8:30am – 4:30pm (must attend the full day to receive the MDA training certification certificate)**

**Location: Ag History Farm Park 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood MD 20855 – or there is also a virtual option available if needed.**

**Cost: Free**

**This training is for fruit/vegetable producers interested in developing a good safety plan and build a food safety culture on their farms; farmers that want help writing their food safety plan (80% will be completed during this training); farmers that want to increase their market access (potential institutional buyers require MD Gap Certification).**

This is for compliance with the Food Safety and Modernization Act. Our farmers that farm value add products should be GAP certified.

**Beginning Farmer Training Course - More information and registration can be found on the [course website](#)**

**It will be a 10-week course, meeting every Thursday evening from 7:00pm-8:30pm from February 2 through April 6, 2023. The course kick-off class on February 2 and the graduation class on April 6 will be held in-person at one of several locations across the state, including the Montgomery County Extension Office. All other classes will be offered via Zoom. Classes will be taught by Extension Educators from around the state. Topics include marketing; financial planning; soil health; licenses, permits, and certifications; food safety; integrated pest management; acquiring land and zoning; and specialty crops. Cost for the course is \$65. A flyer is attached.**

**Additional educational opportunities can be found on the OAG [calendar of events](#).**

### **Additional Business**

Jeremy is planning to retire at the end of September after 35 years of exemplary service. We will miss his dearly!

### **Adjournment**

8:17 pm (Jamison/Silver)