

Minutes from September 16, 2014

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

Attendees: Tim McGrath, David Heisler, Jane Evans, Eddie Kuhlman, David Weitzer, Michele Cropp, Doug Lechliden, Aliza Fishbein, Drew Stabler, Ben Allnutt, Patrick Brown

Staff: Jeremy Criss, Callum Murray, Josh Penn, Cindy Gibson-Councilmember Berliners Chief of Staff

Guests:

The meeting came to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Introductions

With everyone listed above present, brief introductions were made. Callum Murray announced that he would be retiring at the end of this year and that Josh Penn would be serving as the MNCPPC representative for the AAC.

2. Approval of the AAC minutes from July 15, 2014

A long conversation occurred regarding how to address the person specific and detailed notes and comments from the Pesticide Legislation. Eddie Kuhlman said that the AAC meeting minutes exceeds the basic requirements for reporting on the discussion of the AAC and he suggested we simply say an extensive discussion occurred and remove the pages of comments and questions. Drew Stabler said the AAC minutes are considered important for public information. David Weitzer said the comments are very extensive. Michele Cropp said she understood the comments from Eddie, Drew and David and she said she uses minutes from other groups to better understand what was discussed. Michele said there will be a lot more power with the minutes in their current form. There was an additional discussion on the legislation just prior to the July 15, 2014 meeting. Criss read out loud from his notes the comments that were made. The AAC agreed that the additional discussion needed to be incorporated into the final approved minutes and they asked Jeremy to prepare the discussion and share it with those folks that were involved to make sure it reflected what they said. *Please note that Jeremy shared the bullets below with the individuals that are mentioned and they all approved the wording.*

- Please note that AAC moved on to the other agenda items and then prior to adjourning the meeting the discussion on the Pesticide legislation continued as follows:
- Jeremy Criss said that he shared the Draft Pesticide Legislation with the MSCD, APAB, and MCFB and all of these agricultural groups are opposed to the Legislation.
- Doug Lechliden said this is a bad bill and the AAC should oppose it even though it contains an agricultural exemption. I do not think we need to point a finger at the homeowner. I am a homeowner in the County and I do not think I am a problem. We should not support an agricultural exemption and then point our finger at non-farmers.
- Aliza Fishbein said it was strange the legislation exempts County School properties but it applies private schools properties and golf courses.
- Doug Lechliden said if this Bill passes over time bit by bit it will create an environment to take away rights to farmers.

- Eddie Kuhlman said the AAC should flat out oppose Legislation. When the AAC including Hal Baker decided many years ago to support the Rustic Roads Program and we tried to make it work and we quickly learned this was a big mistake.

The minutes were approved as corrected and revised. (Allnutt/Cropp)

3. Update on Deer Damage Survey

Jeremy Criss said a Summer Intern High School Student helped to review the surveys that were returned and develop a summary or the responses. Jeremy handed out a draft summary of the Deer Damage Survey that still needs more work on the format. Jeremy said he would make all the changes on the format and have the completed survey summary ready for the October 7, 2014 Public Safety Committee on Deer Management. Jeremy said that past surveys asked the farmer to list the dollars of crop losses and this loss figures usually included the lost value of the crop did not always include the lost production costs. The DED-Agricultural Services asked for the total acres of each crop and the percentage loss rate for those acres. In 2004 the total crop loss reported was below \$500,000 and the 2014 Deer Damage Survey reported \$6.6 million in total crop losses. Jane Evans said the average loss for soybeans is higher 18.93 % than the other commodity crops but lower than the average loss for fruit and vegetables. David Heisler said that fruit and vegetables are higher cash crops that could be one factor. Jeremy said he completed Deer Damage Survey and Summary would be available at the October 21, 2014 meeting.

4. Update on the Agricultural Services Business Navigator Position:

The County advertised for the Business Development Specialist to replace Kristin Fisher and the closing date for applicants was August 15, 2014. A total of 85 people applied of which 32 applicants met the minimum requirements as determined by the Office of Human Resources-OHR. Two veterans applied and they have preferential hiring status and will be interviewed. The DED Agricultural Services must obtain a waiver from the Director of OHR to interview any of the 32 applicants that met the minimum job qualifications.

5. Update on the Agronomy Educator Contract Position:

The Request for Proposal-RFP was released by the Office of Procurement and the closing date for applicants is September 30, 2014. This will be a \$30,000 part-time contractual position that will work approximately 20 hours per week on Agronomy and Agriculturally related programs offered by the University of MD-Extension. Tim McGrath asked if someone with Commodity Broker experience would qualify and Jeremy answered yes. Patrick Brown asked if farmers hire commodity brokers for grain marketing assistance. Drew Stabler said that many farmers obtain information pertaining to grain prices etc. on line and through newsletters.

6. Update on the MSCD Resource Conservation Position-BDS Position:

Jeremy said that the Resource Conservation position was created by the County at the request MSCD in the 1970's. Jeremy said that Jay Beatty held the position before Brian Taylor was hired. The OHR has approved the reclassification of the Resource Conservation Position to the Business

Development Specialist and the e-recruitment ad will be released soon. The MSCD Board of Supervisors requested the job announcement be advertised within the DED-MSCD. Jeremy said that Council-member Roger Berliner's leadership resulted in the County Council approving Water Quality Protection Funds that will be used to fund this new position. Thank you letters from the AAC and the MSCD were submitted to Councilmember Berliner for his efforts to assist the MSCD and for providing resources that will help to increase technical assistance to farmers.

7. Follow up from the Discussion on the Possible Draft Pesticide Legislation

Jeremy said that he spoke with Council-member Roger Berliner during the Agricultural Leaders Luncheon regarding the request from Council Vice President George Leventhal for a briefing with the T&E Committee on the Pesticide Legislation. Roger said that he did not think another briefing was necessary. Doug Lechliden said I do not think we need to point fingers at homeowners-I am a homeowner in the County and I do not think I am a problem. We should not support an exemption for farmers and then point our fingers at non farmers as the source of the problem. David Heisler asked what problems are we talking about. David explained how his bee hives were killed when they accessed a stream for water that had been impacted by the neighbor up stream using pesticides to kill misquotes in a water way. The runoff came across the road and into the stream the bees used as a source of water. David asked the neighbor what he was using and the amount and he realized the application rate was very high. Doug Lechliden said that all pesticide applicators must have a license to apply pesticide and that David can contact the MDA to report on this pesticide applicator for future applications of pesticides. David said we need more education and regulations on the use of pesticides and he said he did not get feedback from local farmers on what they are using. David said farmers have their backs against the wall. Drew Stabler said that all of these pesticides have been tested and approved for specific ranges and that all farmers must be licensed to use them. We should not have a problem using pesticides. Drew said he has a man on his farm fields with bee hives and he asks him what pesticides we use and we do not have problems. David said he is not organic and that he uses the same controls (pesticides) other farmers use but in a little different way. Drew said the Draft Pesticide Legislation is like the camel's nose under the tent. Michele Cropp said she believes the Pesticide legislation is a matter of when not if it will be introduced. Jane Evans said a summary of this conversation needs to be referenced in the letter from the AAC and that we need more education and less regulation on Pesticides. Cindy Gibson said the T&E Committee schedule is very full for this fall and the Pesticide legislation will not come to the T&E Committee until January 2015 if that is helpful on a sense of timing. Hearing no additional discussion a motion was made and approved for the AAC to draft a letter in opposition of the proposed Pesticide Legislation by Council Vice-President Leventhal. (Lechliden/Stabler)

8. Update on New Farmer Program-Equipment Share Program

Jeremy Criss gave a brief update on the New Farmer Program and the four pieces of farm equipment that was on display during the September 4, 2014 Soil Conservation District Cooperators Dinner at Rock Hill Orchard-Woodbourne Creamery. Jeremy said that Chuck Schuster has scheduled the training for new farmers interested in using the equipment on September 17 and 24, 2014 at the from in the late afternoon before dark.

9. **MCFB Resolutions** Jeremy wanted everyone to know the Montgomery County Farm Bureau Resolutions Committee meetings are scheduled for September 8 and 18, 2014 at 6:00 pm at the AHFP. The Committee will develop Policies for 2015 that include expanded hunting regulations, Medical Marijuana production facilities, improvements for Cover Crop program and Nutrient Management.

10. **Next agricultural advisory committee meeting**

The October 21, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Jeremy announced the MCA will be conducting a premiere of the Agricultural Reserve Film "Growing Legacy" on September 25, 2014 at the University of MD Shady Grove Campus. It was mentioned that the admission fee to see the film was \$9.00 unless you are a MCA member.

Eddie Kuhlman announced that his son was seeking approval of the Poolesville Town Planning Commission for a special exception to operate a land scape contracting business and the hearing was scheduled for tomorrow night. The Special Exception calls for 5-6 business trips per day along the roads. There was a complaint that these trips would negatively impact the Agricultural Reserve. Eddie asked of this business and trips along the road would impact the Agricultural Reserve. After additional discussion the AAC believed the traffic from this proposed business should not be an issue of concern for the Agricultural Reserve.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm . (Kuhlman/Cropp)