

## **Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**January 15, 2013**

**Attendees:** Ben Allnutt, Robert Beall, Tim McGrath, Linda Lewis, Drew Stabler, David Weitzer, Debbie Benson, Charlotte Ruppert, Jane Evans, David Heisler, Patrick Brown

**Guests:** Jane Seigler

**Staff:** Callum Murray

The meeting was called to order at 7:02PM. With no visitors/new members in attendance, introductions were not necessary.

The committee reviewed the Minutes from the December 18<sup>th</sup> 2012 and with minor corrections, the minutes were approved. (*McGrath, Stabler*)

### **Follow-up Discussion on Orientation of New Members**

Due to the work load surrounding the FAME conference, information needed for the discussion had not been adequately prepared. The topic was deferred until next meeting.

### **Update on Zoning Rewrite Process**

A January 4, 2013 letter was presented to the AAC. The letter, addressed to the Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board, summarized the remaining Agricultural Issues for the Zoning Rewrite Process.

Discussion followed. Mr. Weitzer asked for the definition of a Floating Zone and in response, Callum Murray briefly defined it as being similar to an overlay zone generally applied to small areas with unique conditions. The County Council can recommend a floating zone but the property owner must request it to be applied to the property. Robert Beall and Jane Evans asked for an understanding of why the BLT equivalent for square footage of mixed space should be increased due to the Planning Board recommendation that Excess TDRs are proposed to equate to 4,500 square feet of mixed use space. Criss reviewed the math behind the issue where 1 TDR = 5 acres and 1 TDR = 4,500 Square feet of space and 1 BLT = 10,000-20,000 square feet of space. One TDR = \$20,000 and One BLT = \$250,000 and the benefit of using BLTs should always provide greater compensation or provide more equity to RDT landowners than the use of Excess TDRs. The Planning Board's recommendation may result in Excess TDRs providing more compensation or equity to RDT landowners. Callum Murray suggested that in Germantown, the TMX zone should not be changed or an alternative way to gain additional value for developers using BLTs should be explored. Tim McGrath agreed that a BLT must always be worth more than an Excess TDR.

## **FAME Conference**

The Farming at Metro's Edge (FAME) Conference took place on January 11-12, 2013. Panelists included AAC members Drew Stabler and David Heisler and guest Jane Seigler. In attendance were many AAC committee members including Jane Evans, Tim McGrath, Linda Lewis, Debbie Benson. Park and Planning Staff members, Katherine Holt and Leslie Saville were also present.

The Committee listened to feedback from those who attended. Most agreed it was both well-attended (good presence of elected officials and farm community members) and well organized. The format of the event, panel discussions followed by round-table discussions, seemed to work well. Many disliked the third panel stating that it was too big, the topics were impertinent and the late in the day time slot made it hard to stay focused.

The main concern voiced by attendees was related to the written report that would be generated from the meeting notes. While the farming perspective was vocal at the event, the ACC was concerned the farmer's point of view may not be represented in the Final Report. Mr. Criss assured the committee that he would review the draft report and make sure opportunities to make changes exist prior to the Final Report. Ben Allnutt suggested that Criss should send an email to Royce Hanson regarding the draft report being reviewed by the MCFB President and AAC Chair.

Drew Stabler commented on the large amount of work that was done over the two days stating that many important agricultural issues were raised. David Heisler thought one positive outcome was that the role and importance of the University of Maryland Extension was highlighted. Debbie Benson was pleased with both the way the farming community came together and the good ideas that were generated.

### **The committee reviewed and proposed action on the following County Bills:**

- ***Bill-34-12 Storm Water Management – Water Quality Protection Charge***

Mr. Criss explained that the Montgomery Soil Conservation District is taking the lead on this bill to propose a portion of the Water Quality Protection Charge be allocated to the MSCD to help fund the best management practices implemented in the rural and agricultural regions in accordance with the Bay Watershed Implementation Program.

- ***Bill 41-12 Streets and Roads – Roadside Trees***

The committee reviewed a draft letter from the AAC to Council President Nancy Navarro regarding the trimming of roadside trees in Montgomery County. The letter referred back to an earlier version of a similar Bill, Bill 16-12, that was withdrawn by the Council following the damage caused by the June 29, 2012 Derecho storm. The letter reaffirmed the AAC's support for the suggestion that Council Member Nancy Floreen made during the June 12, 2012 public hearing on Bill 16-12. Her suggestion was to develop tree trimming policies that take their environment into consideration, noting that needs for tree trimming differ from trees on rural roads versus those in an urban setting. Also in support of Council Member Floreen's suggestion was a letter from the Montgomery County Farm Bureau, President Lonnie Luther addressed to

The Honorable Isiah Leggett. The letter outlined the problems with planting trees in close proximity to roads (especially for the agricultural community) and expressed disapproval for Bill 41-12 unless it is amended to address the needs of the agricultural community in Montgomery County.

Following the discussion, the AAC moved to revise and send the final version of the drafted letter to Council President Nancy Navarro. *(McGrath/Lewis)*

- ***Bill 35-12 Trees – Tree Canopy Conservation***

The committee reviewed a draft letter from AAC to Council President Nancy Navarro. The letter described the negative impacts that Bill 35-12 would have on the farming community should it pass. The letter questioned the need for a new County Code Chapter 55 Tree Canopy Conservation that is redundant due to the existing Chapter 22-A Forest Conservation. Following the discussion, the AAC moved to revise and send the final letter to Council President Navarro. *(Stabler/Evans)*

### **New Appointments to the AAC**

The Committee members needing to renew their terms were reminded to send the proper documentation to the County Executive staff.

### **Montgomery County 2011 Bridge Inventory**

The AAC reviewed copies of the 2011 Bridge Inventory Summary for all vehicular bridges in Montgomery County (excluding bridges maintained by the Maryland State Highway Administration) and pedestrian structures owned by Montgomery County. The publication describes the current bridge management program performed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and provides a count and state of the County's vehicular bridges and pedestrian structures. The AAC learned that vehicles which have a gross weight exceeding a bridge's weight limit shall not cross that bridge unless a waiver is issued by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation-DOT. The waiver must be obtained at least three weeks before the anticipated crossing. The AAC requested that Mr. Criss pass this information along to the agricultural community and explore with the County DOT the possibility of an annual waiver process, similar to the State Highway Administration for the weight-scales on I-270 and the annual waiver process in rural Howard County .

After reviewing upcoming meetings and events, the Meeting was adjourned at 9:14 pm.