

## **Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)**

### **Minutes of October 16, 2012**

**Attendance:** David Weitzer, Linda Lewis, Tim McGrath, Jane Evans, Drew Stabler, Eddie Kuhlman, Paula Linthicum, Robert Beall, Charlotte Ruppert, Debbie Benson, Chuck Schuster

**Guests:** Rick Walter, Jane Seigler

**Staff:** Jeremy Criss, Callum Murray

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

**Introductions:** Everyone introduced themselves. David Weitzer welcomed Rick Water, Area Extension Director for UME and Jane Seigler, Agricultural representative on the Zoning Advisory Panel. David Weitzer thanked Jane Seigler for her efforts helping the agricultural community on the Zoning Rewrite Process.

#### **Approval of Minutes August 21, 2012:**

The Committee was asked if any changes or corrections were needed to the AAC minutes from August 21, 2012. David Weitzer noted that two grammatical corrections were needed on page 2. Hearing no additional changes Jane Evans motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, and Drew Stabler seconded the motion and it passed. *Please note the AAC did not meet on September 18, 2012 due to severe weather.*

#### **Update on County Council Bus Tours of the Agricultural Reserve**

The Committee learned that DED staff coordinated two bus tours of the Agricultural Reserve for County Council members and staff. The first tour was on Tuesday September 4, 2012 and it covered the eastern portion of the Ag Reserve and we visited three farms: Pam Saul- Rolling Acres Farm, Fred Lechluder and Drew Stabler-Sunny Ridge Farm and Kelly Lewis, Charlotte and Craig Ruppert-Ruppert Nurseries and Landscaping. The second bus tour was on Friday September 7, 2012 and it covered the western portion of the Ag Reserve and we visited two farms: Linda Lewis- Lewis Orchard and Jamie, Kathy, Joe, Patrick, and Michael Jamison- Jamison and Sons. The Bus tours were attended by 25 people and everyone was thankful for the opportunities to visit different types of farming operations and gain better understanding of agriculture.

#### **Orientation for new AAC Members**

The Committee discussed the need to develop an orientation program for new AAC members. Woody Woodroof suggested this program and Woody asked for this item to be placed on the agenda for an upcoming meeting of the AAC. Woody was out of town in Richmond visiting his family and could not attend the October AAC meeting. The Committee agreed to include this item on the agenda for the November meeting.

### **Update on the New Farm Pilot Project:**

The Committee was updated on the New Farm Pilot Project that DED-Staff Sarah Miller is the point person. The Project received 18 applications from people interested in starting farming operations and 8 of the applicants were prioritized as high. There are two property owners that have offered portions of their farms to locate some of the 8 high priority applicants. A Request for Proposal was released for any existing farmers that are interested in receiving payment for providing training and mentoring services to the 8 high priority applicants. Several farmers have responded with interest in the mentoring and training component of the Project that will be available to everyone that has applied.

### **Discussion on the Zoning Rewrite Process:**

The Committee was updated on the correspondence to the Planning Board- September 7, 2012 letter from the MCFB, September 11, 2012 email from Jane Seigler, September 21, 2012 letter from the AAC, October 4, 2012 letter from the AAC, and October 15, 2012 email from Jane Seigler. Jane Seigler walked the Committee through the various recommendations surrounding the Rural and Agricultural Zones including the discussion on the definition of farm which now includes the legal definition of agriculture. Jane Seigler provided numerous handout to the Committee to discuss the items listed separately below:

#### **Urban Farming in Residential Zones:**

Chuck Schuster said he is concerned regarding the definition of Urban farming that allows walk behind machinery and limits the use of most common machinery used for agricultural operations. Chuck Schuster also said the bee keeping in residential zones has been discussed with representatives of the Bee Keepers Association. Linda Lewis asked if the Banks Farm was an example of where Urban farming would be allowed. Jane Seigler said the MNCPPC does not want all types of agricultural uses allowed by right as they are today in the Residential zones. Jane Seigler asked Callum Murray for his view on the proposed standards for farming uses in the residential zones. Callum Murray said he personally had difficulties with using the Agriculturally Assessed Property Tax standard for allowing certain farming uses. He gave some examples of properties that are agriculturally assessed although agricultural uses activities are not in place.

#### **Intent Statement:**

Jane Seigler reviewed the recommendations surrounding the Intent Statement for the Agricultural Reserve Zone. The Chair of the Planning Board supported the wording provided by Dianna Conway and the MNCPPC staff was asked to rework this Intent statement. Callum Murray said the proposal was poorly written, too long, and it contained grammatical errors. Drew Stabler recommended the AAC letter needs to include our concerns surrounding the proposed changes and that we do not believe these changes should be included in the Intent Statement and that the AAC does not support what staff is recommending.

#### **Agriculture Education and Tourism:**

Jane Seigler outlined the staff recommendation for allowing the new proposed term Agricultural Education and Tourism. The Committee reviewed the proposed standards for percentage of property devoted to agricultural products and the percent cap for impervious surface. The Committee agreed that the proposed standards should be tied to agriculture activities on the property. Jane Evans suggested that the standards should be used to foster an environment for promotion and knowledge of agricultural uses and operations. David Weitzer asked if there were any operations out there today that offer Agricultural Education and Tourism. It was suggested that Calleva offers these uses today and that the owners on on-farm markets also provide opportunities for Agriculture Education and Agricultural Tourism. After additional discussion it was agreed that the AAC letter to the Planning Board should propose the following standards for allowing the new use Ag Education and Ag Tourism:

- a. The property must be farmed and agriculturally assessed.
- b. A minimum of 80 percent of the property is maintained in agricultural cultivation, pasture, woodland, or natural features.
- c. Impervious area is a maximum of 8% of the portion of the site where the Agricultural Education/Tourism are is located.
- d. The property must have proper sanitation facilities approved by the Department of Permitting Services.

Footnote 48- Uses Prohibited on TDR Easement Properties:

Jane Seigler said the MNCPPC staff is recommending removal of the prohibition of Bed and Breakfast and uses that currently are prohibited by footnote 48 and this use will be permitted by right. The staff is also recommending removal of the prohibition of Farm Machinery, Sales, Storage, and Service as well as Accessory Apartment and these uses will be permitted as Conditional Use.

Robert Beall commended Jane Seigler for the extensive time she has devoted to the Zoning Rewrite Process in addressing the needs of the agricultural community.

**Farming At Metro's Edge FAME Conference:**

The Committee was informed regarding the dates for the FAME conference January 11-12, 2013 and were provided copies of the draft conference program listing the three panels and the panelist that have agreed to participate. There are additional folks identified as possible panelists and they are being contacted to see if they are interested.

The next meeting of the AAC is November 20, 2012@ 7:00 pm in Germantown.  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.

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