



Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 17, 2025

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Held virtual via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87172188049>;

Call to Order:	Arquilla Ridgell, Chair			Respectfully Submitted by: Meghan Pazmino, Secretary		
Date/Time:	July 17, 2025, 7:00 PM ET					
Attendees:	X	Arquilla Ridgell (Chair)	X	Serge Thomas (Vice Chair)	X	Liza Smith
	X	Carol Kosary		Lee Rubenstein	X	Debra Liverpool
		Gary Fellman (Parliamentarian)		Ben DuGoff	X	Joan McDermott
	X	Meghan Pazmino (Secretary)		Phillip Ardanuy	X	Jonathan Chambers
	X	Rob Fox	X	Rick Gross		Irina Norrell
Staff:	Luisa Cardona Noah Brown, Intern, Mid County Services					
Guests:	Mike Scheffel, Director of Montgomery County Department of Agriculture Hannah Wilcove, Councilmember Glass’ Office Joseph Gelula, Councilmember Sayles Office					

Time	Topic	Notes
7:14	Call to Order & Welcome	The Chair called the meeting to order and reviewed meeting protocols.
7:15	Agenda Minutes	Joan moved to approve the June minutes. Serge seconded. No nays, June minutes are approved. Serge moved to approve the agenda. Rob seconded the agenda. No nays, July agenda is approved.
7:16	Elected Officials	Hannah Wilcove, Councilmember Glass' Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native Plant Protection Act was introduced by Councilmember Glass about a month ago: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill 2625 would prohibit the sale of invasive running

		<p>commercial bamboo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Second part is a zoning amendment for 50% of plants used in all future landscaping projects be native species. ○ The specific species of bamboo banned by this legislation can spread underground by up to 15 feet each year, so once it's in, it's really hard to get rid of. Banning the sale could really make a difference. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comment: I think you should add English Ivy to the list of plants that should be prohibited. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I've heard that several times, so if it's not already on the list, I will bring that up. ● Question regarding landscaping companies and the ban on gas blowers: How is the rebate program going and are the concerns of smaller companies being met? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On Tuesday there was an amendment hearing on the ban that had 40-50 speakers. We did hear from a lot of landscapers and gardeners who were concerned. ○ The rebates were helpful for many to make the switch. ○ The topic is coming before the Transportation and Environment Committee on Monday, July 28 in the afternoon, so that's when the committee will take it up and vote on whether to recommend it to the full council. ● Comment: Thank you for taking up the invasive species legislation. ● Mike Scheffel: Spotted Lanternfly was first found in Cecil and Harford Counties and they said year two was so much better. So this is going to be a bad year and then next year it won't be the same overwhelming swarm of them. <p>Joseph Gelula, Councilmember Sayles Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We are working on a Farm to Table restaurant week in the fall to highlight local restaurants using local ingredients. We're trying to spread the word.
7:28	Presentations	<p>Mike Sheffel, Director of Agricultural Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We represent anyone who wants to grow something in Montgomery County, not just traditional farmers. ● We'll do Solar 101 and Zoning 101 ● Montgomery County has different zones--commercial, residential, ag reserve, etc. All the areas where the county wants different things to happen. The zoning influences who happens on that land. ● The county passed ZTA18-01 creating standards for solar and allowed it anywhere but the Ag Reserve. ● In 2020, a contentious process began ● We were losing 5,000 acres of land a year to residential development. The council used the legislative process to create the ag reserve setting aside land for farming. ● We get complaints about noise or smells, but as long as it's in the zone and the farmer is following all applicable laws, there's nothing we can do.

- The ZTA first proposed no restriction on collection of solar. Initially they wanted to cap it at 2% of the ag zone. The big concession that was made was that they restricted the types of soil to Class 1 and Class 2--the best land for raising crops and livestock.
- There have been three community solar projects in the ag zone. One is approved, one will be approved, and one will be constructed. At the time there was a lot of criticism that the county was not going to meet the state's goal of clean renewable energy.
- The current bill is a huge bill that does a lot of things. This bill pre-empts local jurisdictions and any restrictions that counties have put on solar. The state basically said we didn't like what you were doing, you now have to follow what we are saying to do.
 - It now allows up to 5% of a priority area. It's a lot easier to build on agricultural land than densely developed land.
 - 5% means roughly 5,000 acres of allowable community solar
 - We have seen 3 or 4 projects proposed already that are going to take advantage of the state law.
 - The county wrote in support of solar but asked to keep the restrictions we fought so hard to get. The state said no.
- The vast majority of people who do the farming in Montgomery County don't own their land, they rent it. It's about \$90 to \$250 per acre per year in rent. The solar companies make offers that dwarf anything that farmers are able to pay--upwards of \$5,000 per acre per year. We've seen some land owners tell farmers trying to renew leases
- Agrivoltaics - Farming in, on and around the solar panels. In the mid-atlantic region it's not well understood if the type of farming that happens here could happen under and around solar panels. In the desert southwest, shade provided by panels can be beneficial to plants. We don't know here what that will do for table food farms. It's difficult to grow table food items without herbicides or pesticides.
- The largest type of farming happening here is corn, wheat, grain--anything that can be sold on the international market. We haven't seen any solar set up that will work with the needs of our commodities farmers need for their everyday needs.
- We would love to see a pilot project built. We had a small project funded, but the true costs far exceeded what we had budgeted.
- There is land that won't be impacted by these projects.

Questions/Comments:

- The 2 megawatt threshold was important because anything more than that goes above the county. It's about how the public service commission regulates.
- The county went up to 2% and the state is going up to 5%.
- The state law says the county may not restrict any solar more than this bill, including the soil restrictions.
- Can solar eventually be returned back to agriculture?
 - We don't really know the long term impacts on the land. There are piles put into the ground and then panels are

		<p>installed on them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There's no research on whether it negatively impacts soil or not. ● Comment: We don't need to be putting solar on prime land, we can put them on buildings and parking garages. ● Question: What happened to turbine and wind? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The elevation isn't high enough, the winds aren't strong enough in Montgomery County. ● Question: Dr. Ben Carson wants to turn his property into all solar, the neighborhood doesn't want it because they think it will be unsightly. It says it will be 25 years, is that how long these leases will be there for? Will it leach into the land? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This bill does address that. The projects must be bonded so if they have remediation needs, they will be removed with that money put aside for remediation. ○ It's a new enough industry, we really don't know what's going to happen with them when they meet the end of their lifetime.
8:15	Board Business	<p>Sending a letter to the State Delegation to ask for their support. -Adding specifically to the letter that we will be inviting SHA and MCDOT to the September meeting and we hope that you will attend.</p> <p>Vote on letter inviting the state Delegation to attend a meeting with SHA and MCDOT. Serge moved to vote on the letter. Rick seconds. No nays. No abstentions. Letter is approved.</p> <p>-We will be creating an ad hoc committee to work on safety along Connecticut Ave, Veirs Mill, and Georgia Avenue</p>
8:49	Mid County Director Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members up for reappointment are not able to be on the Review Committee for new members. ● This will probably be my last meeting, I will be moving to the Chief Administrative Officer starting in two weeks. ● There will be a new Mid-County Regional Director, they are appointed positions so they are reviewing candidates.
8:30	WUDAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WUDAC Chair will be working on traffic and transportation emails
8:39	Community Concerns	None
8:58		<p>Serge moved to adjourn the meeting. Joan seconded.</p> <p>Meeting adjourned. Meeting adjourned by Chair at 8:56 p.m.</p>

		NEXT MCCAB MEETING: September 18, 2025 NEXT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING (members only): September 4, 2025