

## HARFORD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

APPROVED MEETING SUMMARY – October 15, 2019

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Members Present: Paul Gartelmann, Sally LaBarre, Lynn Davis, Roland Beckman, Jackie Koehn, John Lloyd, Dennis Kirkwood

Ex-officio Members Present: Jeff Schoenberger

### Review / Approval of July 16, 2019 Meeting Summary

A motion to approve the July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting summary was made. The motion was seconded; the Board unanimously approved the meeting summary.

### Benefits of Hydroponics – Mr. Charlie Pendorf, Owner/Founder of the The Hydrofarm

Mr. Pendorf began his interactive presentation explaining why and how he started *The Hydrofarm*. He stated that his young daughter was very fond of strawberries, and being dissatisfied with the quality of strawberries he was finding in the grocery stores, he decided to grow his own using an indoor hydroponic system made of PVC pipes. Being a fireman by trade, he had no prior experience in botany, horticulture, or business. Mr. Pendorf now owns a thriving hydroponics business with several greenhouses that grow lettuce in man-made indoor ponds.

Hydroponic systems doesn't require quality soil or any soil at all. Produce can be grown anywhere in a greenhouse shelter. The use of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are minimized, if they are used at all. The produce stays fresher for longer lengths of time because cross-country travel time has been eliminated. Mr. Pendorf noted that he ate one head of lettuce from his crop after six weeks in the refrigerator, and it still had its fresh crunch. With only three part-time staff members, 20,000 heads of lettuce can be produced in a month using a hydroponic system. Employing less staff members also drastically reduces the risk of bacterial contamination because less people are handling the product, and no manure is used in the production of the produce. Mr. Pendorf sells his produce to local restaurants who are happy to buy fresh, local produce and save money due to the product's longer shelf life. The cost of his produce is comparable to prices found in the Sysco Discount Food Center.

The growing season can start as early or last as late in the season as you'd like using indoor or sheltered hydroponics. Due to the constant flow of water, nutrients are consistently delivered to the plants, rather than being depleted from the soil over the course of the growing season. Hydroponic systems not only save product and labor costs from having to continually fertilize and maintain the soil, but they also yield better tasting produce. "For instance," Mr. Pendorf says, "a jalapeno pepper that we mostly consider to be a mild pepper, will have a lot more kick when nutrients are constantly nourishing the plant."

During the presentation, discussion did break out regarding the media used for growing seed, light requirements, and greenhouse space needed for the Hydrofarm's system. A question was raised regarding the Farm to Table Program, and Mr. Pendorf clarified that only three farms in Harford County are consistently supporting local restaurants. The Hydrofarm currently supplies

three Harford County restaurants and Ashley Treatment Center in Havre de Grace with fresh lettuce and microgreens. Inquiring EAB members wanting to try hydroponics at home were informed that all supplies needed could be found at Home Depot, and some at-home systems are also sold by Amazon.com.

### Departmental Updates

Mr. Jeff Schoenberger reported that there would be another Hazardous Waste Day November 9<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am – noon at the Harford Waste Disposal Center. The event will have a shredder as well. The stream restoration project at Annie's Playground has been completed. He also noted that the demonstration projects for the Green Infrastructure Plan were to be implemented no later than Spring of 2020.

Mr. John Lloyd spoke with the Army Colonel of Aberdeen Proving Ground regarding potential concerns of sea-level rise and flooding. The Colonel expressed his concern for the areas known to flood on MD Route 40, but knows this is not in his jurisdiction.

### New Business

Mr. Paul Gartelmann asked if anyone had field trip ideas for the group to attend. Ms. Sally LaBarre requested that we visit Emory Knoll Farms pertaining to their use of green roofs.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.