

# Economic Development Agricultural Advisory Board

## Minutes of Meeting

**Date: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 – Hybrid Meeting (In Person at the Harford County Agricultural Center and via WebEx)**

### Attendance:

*(X Indicates Absence)*

Bill Amoss – Ag Land Preservation	Andy Kness – University of Maryland Extension
Alice Archer – Member at Large	Peggy Eppig – MAEF
Janet Archer – Harford County Farm Bureau	Juliet McGuirk – Grain
X - David Boniface – Service	Harmony Miller – Dairy
Emmy Dallam – Retail	Greg Murrell – Member at Large
Charles Filburn – Deer Creek Watershed Assn.	Dawn Rigdon – Nursery
Jason Gallion – Agricultural Specialist	Chad Shrodes – Harford County Council
Derek Hopkins – FFA (Chair)	Quintin Cornwell - Harford Soil Conservation District
Michelle Jennings – Equine	Bob Tibbs – Livestock
Allison Jones – Vegetable/Fruit	Gene Umbarger – Member at Large
Reese Jones – Young Farmers	

***Thanks to Karissa Otte of the Harford County OICT for arranging our meeting on WebEx!***

### Call to Order

The meeting was opened by Derek Hopkins, Chair.

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 17, 2021 meeting were approved as presented.

### Old Business

**i. Update on The Grove**

Alice Archer reported on the upcoming special events at The Grove. The Grove's monthly schedule is posted on [www.HarfordCountyMD.gov/The Grove](http://www.HarfordCountyMD.gov/The Grove).

**ii. Harford/Cecil Butcher Facility Workgroup**

Jason Gallion visited Alice Schott at Bowman's Butcher Shop. Bowman's is planning to lease retail space in Havre de Grace, which will allow for possible expansion at their current facility. Jason will be checking with Smithson's on the status of their new facility. Jason also met with David Culver of Harford County, Planning & Zoning. As of now, we should support the current facilities.

**iii. Agricultural Recycling**

Agricultural plastics will be collected through December 1. Please call to schedule drop-offs to make sure staff is available to assist with unloading. Call 410-638-3417 or (cell) 301-832-8884.

Wendy Doring reported that 77.63 tons of brewery grain waste from four local breweries was diverted from landfills and used as animal feed.

MDA is coordinating a pesticide disposal program. Register with MDA at [mda.maryland.gov](http://mda.maryland.gov) by September 15.

We are optimistic about the possibility of a farm tire recycling collection in 2022.

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## New Business

### i. **Ag Zoning Issues – Codes and Permitted Uses**

A lawsuit was brought against a farmer in Madonna who built a barn on AG zoned property and then used it to store construction equipment (resulting in temporary closure of his business.). Judge Eaves held up the requirement that agricultural and commercial combined must have a Special Exception (SE). This may lead to the probability that all agricultural buildings may need to be permitted. We should inform our local officials that the status quo should be maintained, allowing for the construction of ag buildings without needing a permit.

Everyone was sent a copy of the charts discussed by Councilman Chad Shrodes at last month's meeting. The two charts show Permitted Uses in an Ag Zoning District and also Permitted Uses.

It was announced at last night's County Council meeting that Wilson's Farm Market is looking to sell their 13 acre property on Waverly Drive as a brewery and cafe. Questions were asked about the rules and restrictions for adding another building (and associated parking), on raising "an ingredient" for brewing on the property, and on continuing to operate as a farm store (requiring that 50% of the items be farm grown). It was also asked whether there is any limit on the number of breweries in the county.

### ii. **Solar Facility Issues**

Harford County Farm Bureau held a meeting with Billy Boniface on Monday, April 19 to discuss solar issues, including accessory use, community solar, and large scale commercial solar facilities. The recent legislation, Bill 21-001, Community Solar, would be limited to 10 acres and 2 megawatts, and it does not allow solar facilities on RR or AG zoned properties. This was an excellent discussion of the pros and cons of solar energy.

Alice Archer shared her notes from the Second Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) Virtual Public Comment Hearing for Fairview Farm Solar Project in Harford County, which was held on Tuesday, April 20.

Gene Umbarger commented on the trash along Route 136 now and the possibility of more noxious weeds growing along the road and under the solar panels. Recent articles have suggested that sheep and goats can successfully graze under the panels.

Reese Jones questioned whether parts of the Fielder property passed perc tests. Bill Amoss responded that 26 lots would be allowed.

## Farmers & Community Partnership of Harford County

The Virtual Symposium titled "Harford County, Maryland – Rooted in Agriculture" on Saturday, March 20, 2021 was AWESOME! There were almost 400 registrants from 11 Maryland counties, 16 other states, Canada, and the Philippines – but hundreds more were watching the livestreamed presentation. Rooted in Agriculture will continue to be available on the Harford County website and will be aired on HCN (Harford Cable Network).

Future plans are to hold the 2022 Symposium at Edgewood High School. Members of the Partnership are also working with the agriculture/farms aspect for Harford 250 (Harford County's 250th anniversary) in 2023.

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The NSDOAF (National Society of Descendants of American Farmers) plans to return to the USDA in Washington, DC on April 3-5, 2022. Their caucus will be held on Monday, April 4, and the group will visit Harford County on Tuesday, April 5.

## **Agency / Organization Updates**

Andy Kness reported that the Extension office is mostly open, but visitors should call first. They have a new website: [extension.umd.edu/harford-county](https://extension.umd.edu/harford-county). A workbook has been developed and video/online training is available for Pesticide certification.

Andy also reported that the North Harford FFA Alumni will be holding a fundraiser to support the purchase of FFA jackets. An event is being planned at Fawn View Farm in May to present the jackets. Supporters do not have to be members of FFA or alumni of North Harford; they just need to believe in youth in agriculture.

Janet Archer reported that Harford County Farm Bureau meetings are being held as hybrid, in person at The Grove and also via Zoom. Recent discussions have been held about solar issues. Farm Bureau will be participating in the Festival on the Farm at Fawn View Farm on Saturday, May 22, with a table display. Applications for the Harford County Farm Bureau and 4-H Memorial Scholarships are due by Friday, May 21. 4-H members should be encouraged to apply.

Alice Archer reported that the Harford County Farm Fair will be mostly virtual for entries and contests, with in-person 4-H livestock shows and sale. Planning meetings are on-going.

Juliet McGuirk reported that grain prices are phenomenal now. Plastics and parts may become scarce due to the pandemic.

Dawn Rigdon reported that the nursery business is good, but freight prices are high.

Charles Filburn reported that cleanup along Deer Creek is on-going and never-ending. They have also updated their website.

Bob Tibbs reported on beef prices and making grain purchases.

Gene Umbarger again expressed his concerns about solar facilities.

Emmy Dallam said that retail is doing well. The public is anxious to be out, but must maintain social distancing.

Quintin Cornwell reported for the Soil Conservation District. Spring cover crop certification is underway. Senate Bill 344 raised the rate for Maryland agricultural cost share and rated BMPs (Best Management Practices). Starting on July 1 (the new fiscal year), certain BMPs will be covered at 100%

Peggy Eppig said that MAEF has remained busy, with no slow down. Teacher training for elementary education at Goucher had a full class, and there were 12 teachers for secondary education. Three farm tours for teachers in grades K through 12 have been held online, virtual, or in-person so far this year. Scholarship awards will be announced soon. Grants are available for school gardens. The National Ag in the Classroom convention will be held in Des Moines, Iowa. All four mobile labs are fully booked for 2021-2022, and the Maryland Ag Showcase will be going to some fairs. MAEF has learned how to effectively clean the units between events all over the state.

Jason Gallion thanked Karissa Otte of Harford County OICT and Alice Archer for coordinating meetings while he was in Annapolis. The 2021 Agricultural Grant Program has a deadline of Friday, June 18.

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Applications will be submitted through the e-Civis system. Billy Boniface approved the purchase of new Buy Local signs with the current Harford County logo for local farms and ag businesses.

Harmony Miller had no update.

Greg Murrell reported on the adjustments needed due to COVID restrictions. The Ag Magnet program is growing in numbers and is a very diverse group. The discussions of this meeting are shared with the North Harford staff and students, leading to development of ag issues and sharing ag news on the school website. Work on SAE and Capstone projects is continuing. Stanley the horse has joined the herd as a friend for Bert. The North Harford program receives great support, but a livestock trailer is still needed. (This purchase has been denied by the Perkins grant for the past 3 years.) A meeting was held recently with Soil Conservation and Facilities about composting.

Michelle Jennings reported that horse shows are now being scheduled. There were few spectators at the steeplechase races.

Allison Jones had no update.

Reese Jones asked about the status of the sports facility in Jarrettsville. The property is zoned AG and would need a Special Exception (SE) ruling for "private sports instruction." It was noted that this facility and structure already exists at Velo Farm, 2437 Gibson Road. Additional information and details are needed, and the possibility of a small group meeting with the lawyer and client was mentioned. Reese also commented on the detriment to young farmers on increasing costs for ground rent if the commercial solar facility goes through.

Bill Amoss announced that 58 offers are being processed for agricultural land preservation. An additional 25 farms are being presented to the County Council in May. This will clear the waiting list and represents properties all over the county. Thanks to Harford County for supporting ag preservation. MALPF is also accepting applications until June 1.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 19 as a hybrid, both in-person at the Ag Center and via WebEx.

NOTE: This meeting was later cancelled, with plans to hold the next meeting on Wednesday, June 16.

**Adjournment:** Motion was made and approved to adjourn at 10:26 AM.

Submitted by Alice A. Archer