

Economic Development Agricultural Advisory Board

Minutes of Meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at the Harford County Agricultural Center

Attendance:

(X Indicates Absence)

Bill Amoss – Ag Land Preservation	Andy Kness – University of Maryland Extension
Alice Archer – Member at Large	X - Peggy Eppig – MAEF
Janet Archer – Harford County Farm Bureau	Juliet McGuirk – Grain
X - David Boniface – Service	Harmony Miller – Dairy <i>(by phone)</i>
Emmy Dallam – Retail	Greg Murrell – Member at Large
X - 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
X - Michelle Jennings – Equine	Bob Tibbs – Livestock
X - Allison Jones – Vegetable/Fruit	Gene Umbarger – Member at Large
Reese Jones – Young Farmers	

Other Attendees:

George Mayo

Guests from Baltimore County Government:

Stacy Rodgers, County Administrative Officer

Leonard Howie, Director of Department of Economic & Workforce Development

Sam O'Neil, Senior Advisor to County Executive

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was opened by Derek Hopkins, Chair. George Mayo (formerly with MAEF and formerly a member of the Ag Advisory Board) introduced the guests from Baltimore County Government.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 16, 2021 meeting were approved as presented.

Old Business

i. **Update on The Grove**

Jason Gallion updated the group on the future plans for the Harford County Agricultural Center and distributed a site map showing the proposed locations for additional parking for The Grove, walking trails, a pavilion, a farm themed playground, and the new Darlington Library. Questions were asked about the total acreage available and about having research plots.

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

Juliet McGuirk provided information from the Pennsylvania Beef Council about the Penn State Butcher School Program and also about the Beef Cattle Short Course being offered by Penn State. This information will be shared with the members of the Ag Advisory Board.

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. It was recommended that Harford County be contacted to provide for agricultural plastics collection/storage during the winter months, when farmers are unwrapping bales for feeding.

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iv. **FY 2022 Ag Grant Program**

Jason Gallion reported that over \$300,000 in requests were received through the grants portal, with awards made totaling \$100,000. The three Farmers Markets always receive grant funding, and Jason distributed a list of the other awardees. The grants are made with a 75/25 match on a fiscal year basis and as reimbursement for funds expended. Before 2016, this program was handled by a Cooperative Board. The County now administers the program, with the former Cooperative Board serving as the Review Board. A question was asked about Taste Wise, which is a cooperation between the chef, the farmer, and students. A question was also asked about whether there is follow-up with the grant recipients, especially for non-equipment purchases such as marketing. Applicants are screened as to being a previous versus a new applicant, or whether a previous applicant has a new idea.

Legislative and Agricultural Issues

There are a number of issues relating to agriculture and legislation, as follows:

• Solar Facilities on Agricultural Properties

Bob Tibbs said that Fairview Farm Solar Project (the Fielder farm) did receive approval from the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) for their proposed solar facility. The Farm Bureau policy regarding solar facilities was shared with the members of the County Council. The Council continues to work on community solar guidelines.

• Farm Brewery Legislation

Bill 21-012, the Farm Brewery Moratorium, was passed by the County Council on June 8. The Farm Brewery Study Group was appointed and has held four meetings to date, as well as a farm brewery tour on August 26. Bill 21-020 (shown on the agenda) was introduced to the County Council on September 7, and the Public Hearing is scheduled on Tuesday, October 5. There was discussion about the size of the parcel (proposed to be at least 25 acres) and about what a "parcel" is. There was also a question about the setback being a minimum of 300 feet from any "lot line." A Special Development (SD) ruling would be needed for the property. The Zoning Code would require a Schedule F for the farm owner for a 3 year period.

• Agricultural Zoning and Building Permits

The Public Hearing before the Harford County Zoning Hearing Examiner for Case No. 5945, Special Exception to Permit Construction Services Use in an Agricultural District for Jeffrey & Meghan Lancaster and J.L. Lancaster, LLC on Madonna Road, will be held on Wednesday, September 29 at 6:30 PM.

• Agricultural Preservation Program

Bill Amoss said that about a dozen new properties have expressed interest in either the Harford County or MALPF preservation programs. Bill emphasized that going into preservation is a voluntary program.

Councilman Chad Shrodes formed a study group to look at agricultural preservation, particularly relating to the northern and southern parts of the County and the development envelope. Members of the study group included Kristin Kirkwood of Harford Land Trust, Deb Bowers from Carroll County, and Dave Thompson of Foxborough Nurseries. Two foresters were also consulted because timber is considered a crop. Chad said that the study group is gathering perspectives and looking at valuation, the ranking system, and the selection process. There is lots of pressure on land use, and agricultural preservation is important.

• Redrawing Council Boundaries

The Councilmanic Redistricting Commission has been appointed through Planning & Zoning. So far, there are lots of crazy maps.

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New Business

• Harford 250 Celebration in 2023

Planning is underway for the celebration of Harford County's 250th anniversary in 2023. One of the tasks is to identify "Century Farms" that have maintained family ownership for 100 years or more.

Farmers & Community Partnership of Harford County

Greg Murrell reported that a good meeting was held at North Harford High School with the new President of Harford Community College (HCC), Dr. Feldman, and her staff on June 24. HCC agreed to support Dr. Sharon Stowers in her position at the college and in the administration of the Partnership group. They also want to work with the staff of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) on agricultural curriculum.

As reported before, planning is underway for the 2022 Symposium at Edgewood High School. The theme will be local to global and will highlight their International Baccalaureate program.

Agency / Organization Updates

Greg Murrell announced the following dates for North Harford High School:

Wednesday, October 6 – Virtual Meeting about Magnet Programs

Tuesday, October 26 (6:30 PM) – Meeting about Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences (NRAS) Program

Wednesday, December 1 – Deadline to Apply for NRAS Program

Greg expressed the need for helping with SAE projects for about 200 students.

North Harford High School, with assistance from Rob Weaver of NRCS, is developing a partnership with "the Friends Farm" (Falls Creek Farm on Route 1). Planned projects are to collect rain water from the barn roofs, develop gardens, conduct a forestry inventory, and study ag mechanics. The farm is in a leasing agreement with the Baileys (Grand View Farm), and they are working on an educational aspect.

Janet Archer reported that Harford County Farm Bureau donated a grain bin rescue tube and training to Jarrettsville Volunteer Fire Company. Farm Bureau is working on policy development and will be meeting with Colby Ferguson from Maryland Farm Bureau later this week.

Gene Umbarger expressed his thanks for the recognition of his 90th birthday.

Reese Jones reported on the next locations for the Young Farmer tours:

Friday, October 15 at Highview Farms

Sunday, November 21 at Jones Family Farm in Edgewood

Bob Tibbs reported that Fall livestock shows are underway. Beef cattle prices are good at Vintage Sales.

Andy Kness reported that Winter Meetings are being planned as in-person. Upcoming events were announced as follows:

Thursday-Friday, October 14-15 – Advanced Grazing Workshop at Western Maryland Research and Education Center

Saturday, October 16 – The Woods in Your Backyard Field Day at Harford Glen

Friday, October 29 – Northern Maryland Beef Producers Short Course (Pasture Development and Management) at the Ag Center

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Quintin Cornwell said that cover crop reporting for Fall planting is underway. The Maryland Ag Cost Share Program has raised some coverages up to 100%, but most remain at 87.5%. The FSA/NRCS relocation to the Ag Center was not accepted by the federal agency. Harford County is looking at options.

Quintin brought up an issue relating to damages sustained by a farmer due to construction done by an adjoining property owner. The farmer made a presentation to the Soil Conservation District at a recent meeting. A task force is being formed to look at the permitting process for construction on ag properties, which may result in an increase in involvement by Soil Conservation or other agencies.

Councilman Chad Shrodes said that Quintin made a presentation to the County Council last night on conservation. Chad will keep everyone posted on the ag preservation study group and on rural broadband efforts, especially in northern Harford. Harford County is using CARES Act funding and rural broadband grants. We need to take advantage of the available funds and the timing to make improvements. However, the difficulty is that owners (farmers) do not want fiber run on their properties. There are issues with ownership to the center of the roadway versus easements versus County allocation along the roadway.

Dawn Rigdon said that nursery and garden sales are high and landscapers are busy. They experienced minimal damage from the cicadas.

Janet Archer mentioned the issues with the 4-H Camp, especially the financial concerns. Members of the 4-H community have become involved and are willing to help.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming events – and some cancellations – were noted on the agenda.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 9:00 AM at the Ag Center.

Adjournment: Motion was made and approved to adjourn at 10:48 AM.

Submitted by Alice A. Archer