

Economic Development Agricultural Advisory Board

Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Location: Harford County Agricultural Center

Attendance:

(X Indicates Absence)

Bill Amoss – Ag Land Preservation	X Andy Kness – University of Maryland Extension
Alice Archer – Member at Large	X George Mayo – MAEF
X Janet Archer – Harford County Farm Bureau	Juliet McGuirk – Grain
X David Boniface – Service	X - 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)	Bill Tarpe – Harford Soil Conservation District
Michelle Jennings – Equine	Bob Tibbs – Livestock
X Allison Jones – Vegetable/Fruit	Gene Umbarger – Member at Large
Reese Jones – Young Farmers	

Guests Attending:

Lee McDaniel – Harford Soil Conservation District
 Leslie Zink – Harford Soil Conservation District
 Dr. Sharon Stowers, Harford Community College
 Charlie Pendorf – The HydroFarm, Inc.

Opening: The meeting was opened by Derek Hopkins, Chair.

Presentation by Dr. Sharon Stowers, HCC: Dr. Sharon Stowers, as the Scholar in Residence at Harford Community College (HCC), is continuing to lead the HCC/Harford County Agricultural Community Work Group. This includes various projects as well as the “Gathering at the Community Table” Symposium to bring farmers and the community together.

Sharon announced two exciting events being planned for next year.

USDA Event – Monday, April 6, 2020

This special agricultural conference with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue will be at the USDA in Washington, DC, on Monday, April 6, 2020. This will be a great opportunity to highlight Harford County agriculture, shape what goes on, and provide a forum for bureaucracy (USDA staff) to talk to farmers. To be titled “Celebrating America’s Farms and Food,” there are 100-150 potential attendees. The NSDOAF association will have 75 spots, and Harford County will have 25 spots. Two vans, from HCC and Harford County, have been reserved. The tentative schedule is:

8:30 AM Security Check-In and Breakfast
 9:30 AM Color Guard
 Presentations / Discussion
 12:00 Noon Lunch

Sharon asked for suggested topics and issues of concern that might be discussed:

Agricultural land preservation
 Need for a local butcher facility
 Review of Farm Bureau policy topics: regulatory reform, immigration and farm labor,

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rural infrastructure, tax reform, energy policy, biotechnology and food safety
Food safety related to sales at farmers markets
Losing flour mill and no grain elevators at Port of Baltimore (inability to process grain locally)
Rural development, for example, broadband access, when Harford County is too close to
metropolitan areas, the average income is high, and land prices are expensive
Most productive ground is being lost to development
Innovation of farming – past/present/future
Chesapeake Bay initiatives
Harford County farmers are very diverse, innovative, and conscious of the environment
Working together for similar goals
Support for dairy farmers
Move the local FSA office to the Ag Center
Produce stands versus Grocery stores
Our marketing to bring Marketing of “fresh” and “local” produce
people to our farms Drive-by trucks (for Sprouts)
Technology for marketing: order online, delivery, etc.

Harford County Tour for NSDOAF (National Society of Descendants of American Farmers) – Tuesday, April 7, 2020

A delegation of 50-60 people, plus a photographer, will come by bus to visit Harford County. The tentative schedule is:

9:30 AM	Arrival, Breakfast, and Tour at North Harford High School Derek Hopkins on bus as tour guide
12:00 Noon	Lunch at Van Diver Inn County Executive Barry Glassman to speak
1:00 PM	Tour of Havre de Grace
3:00 PM	Broom's Bloom Dairy Present Century Farm certificates (working with Historical Society)
4:00 PM	Departure

Gathering at the Community Table Symposium – Saturday, March 7, 2020

Sharon also discussed the upcoming Symposium, to be held at North Harford High School on Saturday, March 7, 2020, 8:30 AM-2:00 PM (with a snow date of Saturday, March 14, 2020). The title is “Food, Farmers and Community – Farming Forward.” The guest speaker will be Joe Ligo, TV Series Producer of MPT's *Maryland Farm and Harvest*. The planned sessions are:

- A Healthy Future for Our Families: Farm to Table Cooking and Eating
- Homegrown Harford: The Future of Agribusiness and Agritourism in Harford County
- Innovations of Harford County's Farms: Stewardship and Science
- Tours of North Harford High School's Research Farm Facilities

The registration fee is only \$10 and includes a locally sourced breakfast and lunch.

Sharon will continue to keep everyone informed and welcomes any questions and input.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes from September 28, 2019 were approved as presented.

Membership on Agricultural Advisory Board

Replacements are needed for George Mayo of MAEF (who retired) and for Bill Tharpe of Soil Conservation District (who transferred to MDA). Harmony Miller, representing Dairy, may also

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need to be replaced. Nominations for all three positions will be submitted in January 2020 for appointment by the County Executive.

Presentation by Charlie Pendorf – The HydroFarm, Inc.

Charlie Pendorf briefly described his operation at The HydroFarm, where he grows lettuces, herbs, and microgreens. After renting a property in Pylesville since 2015, he and his wife Holly recently purchased a new property on Route 22 in Churchville (3228 Churchville Road). This was previously three parcels, which have now been combined with a new deed. SDAT is questioning the zoning of the property for ag use. To SDAT, ag use means agricultural activity such as livestock. The Pendorfs property will have, in addition to the greenhouses, at least 5 acres of agricultural activity (livestock and poultry), and they are looking into logging at least 1 acre. **Motion was made by Juliet McGuirk, seconded by Bill Amoss, and approved for the Ag Advisory Board to submit a letter of recommendation to SDAT supporting the Pendorf's endeavors at The HydroFarm, Inc. and the designation of their new property for ag use.** Harford County has provided funds to The HydroFarm through the Ag Grant program, and they do have a successful farming operation. Charlie briefly described hydroponics, which has no soil disturbance and no runoff. He harvests daily and sells his products to local chefs.

Old Business:

i. County Council Bill No. 19-028 – Agricultural Retail Sales

The wording of this bill was developed by the County Attorney and was provided on the Agenda. The agricultural community is encouraged to attend the Public Hearing on this bill on Tuesday, November 5, 2019 at 7:00 PM.

ii. Agricultural Land Preservation

Bill Amoss announced that seven farms were approved. He thanked the Council President for setting up meetings in advance of the vote about the preservation program.

iii. MDA Listening Sessions

Harford County was well represented at the MDA Listening Session held at the Maryland State Fairgrounds on Tuesday, October 1, 2019. For those who did not attend, there is a link for completing the online survey. This information will be forwarded to the Ag Advisory Board members.

iv. Future Plans for Ag Center

Erin Schafer from Facilities & Operations will be attending the next Ag Advisory Board meeting to discuss the business plan for "The Market." The tenants of the Ag Center will also attend.

v. Definition and Zoning for Public Utilities

There is nothing defined in the County Zoning Code relating to "generating stations" or "transmission stations" for solar. According to Maryland Farm Bureau, over 2 megawatts is considered a generating station. As reported previously, Transource will be using the existing transmission structures and the substation in Pennsylvania.

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- vi. **Local Butcher Facility**
No further information.

New Business:

i. **MAEF Annual Banquet & Auction**

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) Banquet will be held on Thursday, November 7, 2019 at Michael's Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie. The Ag Advisory Board will purchase a table of 10, and the County van will be reserved. This will be a good time to show appreciation to George Mayo upon his retirement.

ii. **Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) Calendar**

Governor Hogan's executive order to start school after Labor Day was overturned, and local school boards are now to decide on the start of school. The HCPS calendar committee presented the 2020-2021 proposed calendar with two options, to start before or after Labor Day. There are 60 days allowed for public comment, with a vote expected by the Board of Education on Monday, December 16, 2019. The County Executive is opposed, and all three Senators are sending a letter in opposition, to starting school before Labor Day. However, the union contract mandates in-service days and equal planning time for elementary and secondary grades, which is a complicating factor. According to a Goucher poll, 71% of parents/families support school starting after Labor Day. Everyone was encouraged to write letters to the Board of Education outlining the impact on 4-H and FFA participation at the Maryland State Fair, and the economic impact on farmers and others who rely on student help through the busy Labor Day weekend. Bob Tibbs mentioned that the State Fair will be redoing their schedule based on when school starts. The following talking points were provided by Colby Ferguson of Maryland Farm Bureau:

- Less participation of 4-H and FFA students at the Maryland State Fair
- Impact on agriculture and agritourism as a seasonal business
- Loss of workers for seasonal (farm) markets and for commercial businesses as students go back to school or college

It is important to have the students themselves speak about the impact of starting school before Labor Day. **Motion was made by Bob Tibbs, seconded by Bill Amoss, and approved to have the Ag Advisory Board send a letter to the County Executive and to the Harford County Board of Education opposing the start of school before Labor Day.**

Agency / Organization Updates

- The Harford Land Trust Dinner will be held at the Armory on Saturday, October 19.
- The Maryland Million will also be held on Saturday, October 19.
- The Harford County Farm Bureau Bull & Shrimp Roast will be held on Saturday, February 22, 2020.
- Lee McDaniel of Harford Soil Conservation District reported that their federal partners, FSA and NRCS, have hired more employees in the past year and that the office space waiting at the Ag Center (Suite 300) might not be sufficient. They are looking at options.

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Meeting Dates

The meeting dates at the bottom of the Agenda are now correct.

Adjournment: Motion was made and approved to adjourn at 10:18 AM.

Submitted by Alice A. Archer