

## FARM BREWERY STUDY GROUP

July 12, 2021

Minutes

10:00 AM

The meeting was called to order by Councilman Robert Wagner at 10:00 AM.

### **Membership** – All members attended

- Council Members
  - Robert Wagner
  - Tony Giangiordano
- Representative of Harford County Sheriff's Office
  - Erik Robey
- Member of the Farm Bureau
  - Michele Magness Hill
- Member of the Farming Community
  - Alice Archer
- Representative, Harford County Department of Planning & Zoning
  - Jenny Jarkowski, Director
- Representative, Harford County Inspections, Licenses & Permits
  - Paul Lawder, Director
- Representatives of the Farm Brewery Industry
  - Kevin Atticks – Executive Director, Brewers Association of Maryland
  - Alex Galbreath – President, Falling Branch Brewery

Councilman Wagner commented on a southern Maryland newspaper article, noting it appears other counties around the state are struggling with the same issues regarding activities on agricultural ground.

### **Health Department considerations:**

Dr. David Bishai (Harford County Health Officer), John Resline (Assistant Environmental Health Director) and Brian Phipps (Environmental Health) were available for discussion.

The Health Department is not the sole provider of information regarding breweries; it is a joint effort with other agencies. The Health Department does provide guidance on septic systems.

Information from Maryland Department of the Environment, "Options for the Management of Food Processing Wastewater" was provided.

Most farm breweries are served by well and septic. There are issues regarding potable water supply and the disposal of wastewater. Onsite sewage disposal is a factor since production of beer generates a large amount of wastewater. None of the currently approved farm breweries

have food service or food licenses. To date, none of the breweries have requested food service along with their beer production. If that were the case, the septic dynamics would be altered.

There is split regulatory oversight. The Health Department regulates the sizing of the onsite sewage disposal system and septic and MDE deals with the storage of the wastewater that is generated during the production process. When farmers cannot “land apply” the wastewater, they “pump and haul” to another location for disposal.

For a taproom, Harford County Health Department is using the calculation of 20 gallons/seat (for example, 50 approved seats in a taproom would be multiplied by 20 and the septic system would be sized on 1,000 gallons/day). If a restaurant were added to that and seating were still approved for 50 seats, the calculation would be increased to 50 gallons/seat, which would then require 2,500 gallons/day. It was questioned if the outdoor seating is considered during this process. An attempt to properly evaluate the total number of seats, indoor and outdoor, is important to the process.

#### **Criteria to be considered:**

- Minimum acreage – There is a wide range of minimum acreages across the state. Many breweries around the state of Maryland operate on 10-25 acre farms.
- Retain as supplemental to farm operation or change to primary use?
- Adequate parking on site –Temporary parking areas to be set aside for unexpected large crowds (in the field or offsite)? Difficult to predict potential number of customers. No parking on roadway leading to driveway.
- Must be zoned and assessed agricultural, with the intention to farm. Primary use is agriculture.
- Will a farming operation include animal farms (horse and cattle) or limited to crop farming? All agriculturally farmed land.
- Existing farm, operated by farm owner or farm manager, who has a vested interest
- At least one acre of the ingredient be grown on the property. Does the ingredient need to be grown onsite or on non-contiguous property owned by the same farm owner?
- Ultimate goal is to complete this review without requiring additional administrative steps for applicants, if possible
- Setbacks should be measured from taproom – Suggest 200 ft. (Parking and activities may be permitted within the setback.)

- Discussion on “fairness” to prove farming operation has taken place for 3 years on the property.
- Define “special events”?

The next meeting for the Farm Brewery Study Group is scheduled for Wednesday, August 4, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers.

Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 AM.