

(Attachment B.)

Criss, Jeremy

From: Floreen's Office, Councilmember
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2014 10:49 AM
To: Trupp, Zac
Cc: Elrich's Office, Councilmember; Leventhal's Office, Councilmember; Rice's Office, Councilmember; Riemer's Office, Councilmember; robert@windridgefarm.com; Criss, Jeremy; weitzer@erols.com; Plummer, David C.; Silverman, Steve; Hoyt, Bob; Sesker, Jacob; Levchenko, Keith; Farber, Steve; Jablow, Judy; Tibbitts, Dale; Vitale, Patricia
Subject: Re: Memo - Assistance to Agricultural Community & Water Quality Protection Charge

Of course!

Sent from my iPad

On Apr 14, 2014, at 10:47 AM, "Trupp, Zac" <Zac.Trupp@montgomerycountymd.gov> wrote:

Please find attached a memo from Councilmember Berliner regarding his request for assistance to the agricultural community. If you have any questions, please direct them to Cindy Gibson, Chief of Staff for Councilmember Berliner.

-Zac

Zachary Trupp | Legislative Aide | 240-777-7828
Office of Councilmember Berliner | County Council
100 Maryland Avenue | Rockville, MD 20850
[Website](#) | [The Berliner Brief](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

<Memo - Assistance to Agricultural Community & Water Quality Protection Charge.pdf>

(B)



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

April 14, 2014

TO: Nancy Floreen, PHED Committee Chair
Marc Elrich, PHED Committee Member
George Leventhal, PHED Committee Member

FROM: Roger Berliner, Councilmember, District 1 

SUBJECT: Assistance to Agricultural Community & Water Quality Protection Charge

I am writing to you to ask for your consideration and support of an additional \$320,000 to the Department of Economic Development (DED) budget for use by the Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD). If supported by the PHED Committee, the T&E Committee will then consider use of the Water Quality Protection Charge Fund for the uses outlined by Robert Butz's March 27 letter to the County Council. I understand that \$220,000 of this request could be taken off the reconciliation list as it would not need a new funding source, only a transfer from an existing one. Therefore, the MSCD's request would require \$100,000 at most in new funding, though I understand there are some discussions about additional transfers between the CIP and Operating Budget than can be explored which may alter this number.

As you know, the MSCD helps farmers achieve their conservation goals through the protection of soil, water, and other natural resources. With increasing requirements from the state, the expectations of farmers have only increased placing necessary but difficult challenges on the agricultural community. It is essential that we provide the appropriate and adequate resources to help this important sector of our economy and community continue to thrive.

Given the dramatic increase in workload for MSCD and fairly recent budgetary cuts to the District, including the 2010 elimination of a conservation planner position, I agree that more needs to be done to support these conservation efforts. There is simply more demand for assistance than MSCD can provide. Therefore, I support the addition of \$320,000 for the restoration of one Conservation Planner position, the migration of a current Conservation Planner from the DED budget, funding to address current inadequacies in the MSCD operating budget, and establish a BMP cost-share program to assist landowners in meeting the Watershed Implementation Plan.

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I plan on attending the PHED Committee discussion of these items on April 22. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

cc: Craig Rice, Council President
Hans, Riemer, Montgomery County Councilmember
Bob Hoyt, Director, DEP
Steve Silverman, Director, DED
David Weitzer, Chair, Agricultural Advisory Committee
Robert Butz, Vice Chairman, MSCD
Jeremy Criss, Agricultural Services Manager, DED
Keith Levchenko, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council
Steve Farber, Staff Director, Montgomery County Council
David Plummer, District Manager, MSCD
Jacob Sesker, Senior Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council



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Montgomery Soil Conservation District

18410 Muncaster Road - Derwood, MD 20855 - Phone (301) 590-2855
www.montgomeryscd.org

March 27, 2014

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Water Quality Protection Charge Funding to assist the agricultural community

Dear Council Member Berliner:

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) needs your assistance to provide our agency with critical funding from the County's Water Quality Protection Charge (WQPC). Since our founding in 1945, MSCD has helped farmers to achieve their conservation goals through the protection of soil, water, and other natural resources. Rarely in our history has this mission been more important than today. The effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay and local watersheds has resulted in increased regulation and higher expectations being placed on the agricultural community. The MSCD formally requests your help to insure that we have the resources available to meet the growing demand for conservation technical assistance from Montgomery County farmers.

Please consider the following factors regarding our request for WQPC funds:

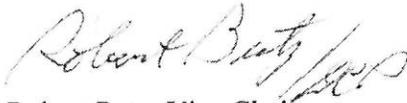
1. The agricultural sector faces challenging conservation goals under the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) developed as part of the EPA mandated Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL).
2. The WQPC is assessed on thousands of properties in the rural areas of the county. This funding is then used for water quality projects in urban areas. Rural landowners who pay this fee are in effect subsidizing improvements to water quality problems associated with down-county development while their own needs go un-met. A better solution would be to allocate this funding to MSCD to help farmers install conservation practices that improve water quality within our rural communities.
3. MSCD is the lead agency in providing the technical assistance necessary to help Montgomery County farmers install conservation practices that will achieve the ambitious goals mandated by the WIP. In addition, MSCD administers State and Federal cost-share programs, which enable landowners to leverage public funds, in combination with their own funding, for the purpose of installing conservation practices on their farms. It is important to insure that Montgomery landowners have as much access to these funds as their counterparts in other counties.
4. In order to effectively carry out this important work, MSCD needs additional resources to enable us to provide a higher level of service to the agricultural community. Due to budget constraints in 2010, Montgomery County DED was forced to eliminate a +25 year Conservation Planner position within MSCD. As we are a small agency, this reduction in staff was a major blow to our ability to effectively carry out our mission. Simultaneously, the dramatic increase in workload associated with the WIP has led to a serious decline in our ability to serve our customers.

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Councilmen Berliner
March 27, 2014
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Please consider the attached proposal, which requests an allocation of \$320,000 in funding from the WQPC to MSCD. These funds, while less than 2% of the WQPC fund, will have a major impact on our ability to carry out our work. To date we have coordinated our effort through the Department of Environmental Protection. After working on this request for over two years however, it has become clear to us that this funding initiative will require the Council's leadership, and we thank you for championing this cause for MSCD and the agricultural community. We look forward to working with you and your staff to increase conservation in the Ag Reserve.

Sincerely,



Robert Butz, Vice Chairman
Montgomery Soil Conservation District

Enclosure

Cc: Montgomery County Councilmembers
David Weitzer, Chair Agricultural Advisory Committee
Jeremy Crisis, Director Agricultural Services-DED

Strategy for Addressing Agricultural TMDL Goals in Montgomery County through the Water Quality Protection Charge

BACKGROUND

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) is the lead agency for providing the technical assistance necessary to help Montgomery County farmers install conservation practices that will achieve the ambitious conservation goals established as part of the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) for the agricultural sector. The Montgomery County WIP was developed to meet nutrient and sediment reduction goals under the EPA mandated Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL), which are intended to help restore the Chesapeake Bay. The effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay and local watersheds has resulted in increased regulation and higher expectations being placed on the agricultural community.

The Water Quality Protection Charge (WQPC) is assessed on thousands of properties in the rural areas of the county. This funding is then used for water quality projects in urban areas. Rural landowners who pay this fee are in effect subsidizing improvements to water quality problems associated with down-county development while their own needs go un-met. A better solution would be to allocate this funding to MSCD to help farmers and rural landowners install conservation practices that improve water quality within our rural communities.

JUSTIFICATION

The main objectives of this proposal are:

- I. Provide the agricultural community with technical assistance for soil conservation and water quality planning and conservation practice implementation. This will help insure that the County meets the mandated TMDL goals and provide farmers with the resources they need to comply with increasing regulations surrounding the Bay cleanup effort.
- II. Insure that Montgomery landowners have full access to State and Federal cost-share programs, which enable them to leverage public funds, in combination with their own investment, for the purpose of installing conservation practices on their farms. It is important that Montgomery farmers have as much access to these funds as their counterparts in other counties.
- III. Use WQPC funds collected from rural residents to increase conservation and water quality protection in their communities rather than for problems associated with down-county development.
- IV. Restore the capacity within MSCD to fulfill the conservation needs of the agricultural community.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) installed with cost-share programs involve a unique leveraging of public and private funds. This represents an opportunity for the county to achieve water quality goals through private investment by farmers and brings federal and state funds to the county to improve our natural resources.

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

MSCD works with landowners throughout the County to implement BMPs that improve water quality and reduce storm water impacts. Most conservation practices that farmers install have stormwater benefits in addition to the associated nutrient and sediment load reductions. Through the development of Soil Conservation and Water Quality (SCWQ) Plans for landowners, MSCD makes recommendations on conservation techniques that improve soil health and increase infiltration capacity. By allowing more rain to permeate into the soil rather than running off into streams, these practices prevent soil erosion and control stormwater flows.

Providing resources to MSCD through the WQPC will help insure that the rural landowners that pay the WQPC will have tangible water quality benefits right in their own communities. Funding from the WQPC will be used to restore the 25 year Conservation Planner position, migrate a current Conservation Planner from DED funds, and address deficiencies in MSCD’s operating budget. Outreach programs will also be developed to address the increase in requests from small specialty growers that have emerged through the County’s new farmer pilot program.

A portion of the proposed funding will also be used to establish a rental equipment program for conservation practices and encourage implementation of conservation practices. Many landowners are interested in a variety of conservation planting techniques, but may not have the equipment necessary to carry out these practices. This may include no-till planting practices for cover crop and pasture reseeding, as well other conservation equipment such as aerators, conservation tillage, and compost spreaders. Establishing a County cost-share program to encourage landowners to install conservation practices will reduce the burden of new state regulations on our farmers and help the agricultural sector meet the ambitious WIP goals.

PROPOSED BUDGET EXPENDITURES

Funding received by MSCD will be used to cover the following current budget shortfalls:

Re-Instate 25 year Resource Conservationist Position		\$100,000
Migrate Resource Conservationist from DED funds		\$100,000
Operating Funds		\$50,000
Conservation Matters Newsletter	\$5,000	
Communications, phones, copiers, etc.	\$5,000	
Office supplies, equipment, printing, etc.	\$3,000	
Conservation Equipment Rental Program	\$20,000	
IT Equipment	\$10,000	
Workshops, Seminars, Outreach to small Agricultural landowners	\$7,000	
BMP Cost-share Program		\$70,000
TOTAL REQUEST		\$320,000