



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

December 6, 2013

The Honorable Craig Rice
Montgomery County Council President
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Rice: RE: Magnet Program for Agriculture Education

On behalf of the Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC, we want to thank you for your recent comments to establish a Magnet Program for Agriculture Education in the Montgomery County Public Schools-MCPS.

On September 16, 2013 you attended the roll out of the Farming at Metro's Edge-FAME report which advocates the need for more agriculture education in schools and to the general public. You commented to the audience the need for a Magnet Program for Agriculture Education and suggested scheduling a full Council work session after the holidays to discuss the recommendations of the FAME report. On November 18, 2013 you attended the Grand Opening of Woodbourne Creamery and during your comments you again commented a Magnet Program for Agriculture Education was needed in the County schools. The AAC strongly agrees with your comments regarding the need for more agriculture education because the growing disconnect between farmers and the general public has contributed to the environment where most children and their parents do not know where their food comes from.

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation-MAEF which is funded by the Ag Tags offered by the Motor Vehicle Administration helps to fund agriculture education programs. The Ag Tags "Our Farms Our Future" help to fund the MAEF agriculture education programs and services throughout the State. The MAEF Director of High School and Post-Secondary Programs, David Miller is a former Agriculture Education teacher at Gaithersburg High School and he continues to advocate for Technical-Career Opportunities in Agriculture Education in the MCPS. Mr. Miller has also suggested another approach for agriculture education in the schools that is titled Curriculum for Agriculture and Science Education-CASE which can be either an accredited or elective course offered to students depending on the qualifications of the individual teaching the course. The CASE program has been discussed with representatives of Poolesville High School although the concept has not gained traction with MCPS officials.

We would be interested in meeting with you to discuss your thoughts as well as to discuss MAEF programs and the potential assistance the MAEF and David Miller may be able to provide.

Plus consider adding: If you wish to contact David Miller directly he can be reached at dmiller@maefonline.com or 310-788-7774. The MAEF office address is P.O. Box 536, 403 Oakington Road, Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078, phone 410-939-9030.

Agriculture continues to represent the number one industry in the State of Maryland. This statement is supported by the following facts: Agriculture is the first industry to exist in Maryland and the largest industry in terms of the number of people employed and the largest industry in terms of total land mass that farming encompasses. However, here in Montgomery County where we are nationally recognized with establishing the Agricultural Reserve which encompasses 1/3 of the County, agriculture has been deemphasized significantly over the years in our schools.

Thank you for your continued support for agriculture in the County and for your time to understand the views of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC. On behalf of the AAC, we want to thank you again for your interest in expanding agriculture education in the County schools. We look forward to working with you to address your interest in agriculture education in Montgomery County.

Please let us know if you would like to schedule a meeting to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Weitzer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

David Weitzer, Chairman

Cc: Members of the AAC
Members of the APAB