

**Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
November 17, 2015**

**Attendees:** Drew Stabler, Eddie Kuhlman, Pete Driscoll, Linda Lewis, Debbie Benson, Jane Evans, Patrick Jamison, David Weitzer, Dennis Kamber, Aliza Fishbein

**Staff:** Jeremy Criss

**Guests:** Randy Stabler

1. **The meeting came to order at 7:00 pm.**
2. **Approval of the AAC Minutes from October 20, 2015.** *(Stabler/Evans)*
3. **Follow up on the AAC Sub-committee-Micro-Alcohol Production Facilities – Fruit and Grain based Alcoholic beverages. Events on farms providing food and the request for food trucks-trailers that are prohibited due to Transitory Uses restricted under Section 3.1.5 TDR Prohibitions. Discussion on Made in Montgomery-Proposed by Council members Leventhal, Elrich, and Riemer**

We are waiting for the subcommittee's recommendation for the definition. There is a challenge in the zoning ordinance for food trucks where there are TDRs. This should be a quick fix without ramifications on other non-use restrictions. Current transitory use is defined as a construction trailer located on a site that is being subdivided that an engineer uses. When a property then moves on to the developer to sell the lots they put in a nice mobile structure. A food truck is included in that definition. They are prohibited on properties encumbered by TDRs since they're deemed as non-agricultural. But if you're going to have an on-farm event, why not allow a food truck to sell food and beverage?

The Council discussed earlier this year the creation of a Made in Montgomery Cable program and the "Visit Montgomery" Conference/Visitor's Bureau staff representatives prepared outline for tourism. They want to promote wineries and breweries. Jeremy mentioned the trouble with this definition and we are hoping that a council member will introduce a zoning change proposal.

4. **The Office of Agriculture was effective on October 6, 2015. The OHR moved all positions into the Office of Agriculture to approve time cards in the ERP System for payroll. The final decisions on reclassification for the Office of Agriculture administrative support reflects a Program Manager II Grade 25 position that will not provide an opportunity for Peter Bang to migrate. The County Code Chapter 2-B has yet to be posted on line with the amendments reflecting the June 30, 2015 adoption of Bill 25-15. The head of the new Office of Agriculture will report to Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer. An announcement regarding the Office of Agriculture is pending the final decisions from the County Executive staff on the staffing details, classifications, and organizational structure. A letter from Leaders of agricultural community was forwarded to the County Executive requesting a meeting. An email response to the letter was sent from the Director of the Office of Human Resources.**

(All information is sufficiently covered above in the Agenda description)

**5. We are working with the County Cable Administrator and Comcast Business Service to replace the phone system and T-1 lines at the AHFP. This will involve participation of all agricultural agencies-MSCD, MDA, NRCS, FSA, UM-Extension and Office of Ag for Voice over Internet phones only. The USDA (NRCS and FSA) will maintain their T-1 line internet capacity. The plan will involve transferring all current funding for phones and T-1 lines to Comcast Business Service for both phones-voice and High Speed Broad Band-data internet service. There is cost savings on the new phone system and a small cost increase each month on internet for a new system that will actually work.**

Comcast business services gave their estimate to replace the Verizon phones and T-1 lines that they have at the Ag History Farm Park. Ideally they want all the agencies to participate. They will all participate for replacing the phones. Unfortunately, USDA's NRCS and FSA have to maintain their T-1 line for internet access but they want the voiceover internet voice system. There will be savings every month. But the cost per month will be slightly higher than what we'd like because the USDA isn't on board. Comcast is waiving the cost to run the cable up the driveway.

**6. The Interview Panel recommended to the Office of Human Resources that a job offer be made to one of the candidates (Shelly Ingram) for Equine Resource Conservation position that Eddie Franceschi formerly occupied. The conditional job offer was made to Ms. Ingram and the start date with orientation should be after the holidays?**

Her start date is Jan 11, 2016. She has 35 years of experience in equine related properties and businesses. She is aware of soil conservation and impressed the panel. After this, the soil conservation district will be fully staffed again.

**7. Follow up from the October 19, 2015 Ag Preservation Advisory Board briefing with the County Executive to discuss alternative funding for farmland preservation programs and the FY17-21 CIP Budget submission. The DED submission consisted of \$1.5 million per year for the Biannual CIP- \$500k Water Quality Protection Charge, \$500k Current Revenue-(County Ag Transfer tax or Investment Income from tax) \$500k from MNCPPC Legacy Open Space Program. The APAB recommended \$2.0 million per year.**

We were well-received. The Executive was interested in the powerpoint presentation. It compared an aerial photo of Lewis Orchard to other farms from down Peach Tree Rd that were developed. They said that if we want us to have what the Lewis' have, then this is what it will cost. The Executive was interested in how the new BLT program works. After the briefing, APAB identified three sources of funding to purchase easements. John Zawitowski reached out to Lisa Feldt, the Director of DEP, for water protection funding and she is looking into it. It looks encouraging.

Josh Penn was appointed by the planning board to review the recommendations in the legacy open space mater plan and develop a recommendation for expanding the partnership with Ag Preservation. They are working on all three sources. DED requested \$500,000 from each of those funds for a total of \$1.5 million. APAB requested 2 million. These alternative funding

sources look promising. The intent in the master plan was that Ag Services would purchase the easement interest on properties in the Ag Reserve using LOS money.

### **8. MoCo Food Council/Office of Agriculture-Public Forum-On Farm Composting December 3, 2015**

This is an opportunity for everyone to learn about the new regulations promulgated by MDE. It provides opportunities for small and large scale composting facilities. These regs do not include animal mortality composting – animal compost should not be used in horticulture because of prions, which is why the state highway authority can use it for wildflowers on medians, but nothing else.

There will be a workshop in the morning to hear from Brenda Platt from the US Compost Council, then from MDE on the regs. Jeremy will speak about which people can provide technical assistance for conservation/nutrient management plans. A DEP representative will discuss how they plan to achieve/the farm community can participate in their goal of reducing the total amount of tons of solid waste by 70% by the year 2020. Organic material is about 20% of total tonnage that's being incinerated when it could be composted and DEP hopes that some of that can be diverted to farms.

Food Recovery Working Group – they are working to find food from groceries, restaurants, and cafeterias to be distributed. That way they can email one number which leads them to central clearing house where all food is gathered before being sent out.

David Weitzer noted that some dairy farms feed vegetables to cows, which adds moisture to the compost. Debbie Benson said they do that too, but sometimes they pick up metal which is not safe. Jeremy talked about how Manna does a good job of segregating their organic food waste and will put it in big bins in the freezer until the farmer comes and picks it up. They are looking for interested farmers to take fruits and vegetables. Linda Lewis goes to the Capital Area Food Bank for a similar product.

### **9. Forum on Ending Obesity in Montgomery County-December 9, 2015**

Will include nutritionists that are part of the USDA and are assigned to UM Extension.

### **10. University of MD-Extension-Managing Avian Influenza-December 16, 2015 6:00 pm**

Once true migratory geese come into the area there is a concern that we will see Avian Flu. The purpose of the event is to teach how to manage your flocks in this environment.

### **11. Next Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting – January 19, 2016**

There will be no meeting on December 15, 2015, and they will have the subcommittee meeting that night in our usual room. The next meeting will be January 19, 2016. We will have a New Years party before the meeting.

12. Drew, Jane, and David are done with their terms. They are welcome to keep attending our meetings. There was a discussion about their replacements.

Motion to adjourn passes. (*Kuhlman/Lewis*)

