

**Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting  
June 16, 2015**

**Attendees:** Drew Stabler, David Weitzer, Debbie Benson, Jane Evans, Linda Lewis, Michele Cropp, Doug Lechliden, Eddie Kuhlman, Patrick Jamison

**Staff:** Jeremy Criss, Josh Penn

**Guests:** Cindy Gibson, Chief of Staff-Council Member Roger Berliner

**Introductions**

Everyone went around the room and stated their name.

**Approval of the AAC Minutes from May 19, 2015.**

The minutes from the May 19, 2015 meeting were approved as corrected (page 3 needed the word with included). (*Evans/Cropp*)

**Follow up on the Pesticide Legislation Bill 52-14.**

Staff reviewed the response email from Council President Leventhal regarding the AAC Letter on Noxious Weeds in front of the Up-County Regional Services Center. Cindy Gibson handed out a memorandum dated June 16, 2015 from Roger Berliner to Council Legislation Attorney Josh Hamlin regarding amendments to Bill 52-14. Roger is proposing the removal of a Pesticide Ban on private property and he wants to replace the Ban with increased education, awareness, and notification to property owners regarding the types and amounts of pesticides applied to their lawns. Roger has tried to convince George to rethink the bill and to consider a phased in approach. George's Pesticide Bill 52-14 has 5 cosponsors so the Bill came to the T&E Committee for public hearings and work sessions. Roger has 4 cosponsors to support his amended Bill that proposes an alternative approach-(Berliner, Katz, Rice, and Floreen). Cindy said we have time between now and September to identify a fifth cosponsor to the amended Bill. Roger hopes to get the amended Bill passed sometime this fall.

Doug Lechliden said he believes Roger's Bill represents a good common sense approach. Doug said that many of the things that Roger is requesting are already being done. Cindy said that Roger wants to increase education and awareness with a more scaled back Bill given the current climate. Jane Evans said the increasing education makes sense and she acknowledged that Roger attended the Farm Bureau picnic at Sunny Ridge Farm and Roger went on the hay ride to the grain bins and pesticide containment facility where he asked many good questions surrounding the use and handling of pesticides. Doug Lechliden said he is concerned regarding lawns that are maintained with organic products that Nutrient Management laws may restrict the continued use and application of the organic products.

Cindy said the Roger's Bill on Pesticides will still be the strongest legislation in the US even with these amendments. The legislation will also provide clarity on the agricultural exemption applying to public lands that are rented to farmers and actively farmed like the Agricultural History Farm Park and Site II in Dickerson. Cindy said the correspondence surrounding the Bill 52-14 was as follows: 80 % were in favor of the pesticide ban and 20% were against the pesticide ban. Doug Lechliden said that there is tremendous confusion in the community and that many people do not realize what the proposed changes will do.

The Committee thanked Cindy for her report and the welcoming news on the new approach to the pesticide bill.

**Follow up from the May 27, 2015 AAC Subcommittee meeting.**

Jeremy reviewed the comments from the members of the subcommittee where they asked the propose definitions for farm brewery, hard cider, and distillery be more concise and less wordy. Jeremy said the County code needs to be consistent with the State code and he proposes the property owner should only need to obtain a license to sell alcoholic beverages from the State and not the County. The Group will also hear from representatives from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on the Food Safety regulations governed by the State.

Jeremy said he attended a bus tour of the Agricultural Reserve on June 11, 2015 with the County Executive and other Executives and Commissioners from around the State that represent the Maryland Association of Counties MACo Executive Board. Jeremy said that farmers across the state are trying to promote opportunities for people to visit the farms and purchase fresh local food. Jeremy provided copies of Agricultural Marketing Specialists from around the State including their contact information. He encouraged them to contact these folks to better understand the challenges their farmers are facing. Farmers cannot afford to construct a Panera Bread facility on the farm; however, the building codes for mercantile-commercial use treat commercial businesses in the rural areas the same as the urban areas. The Panera Bread is open year round while the businesses on farms are only seasonal. The rural businesses cannot cash flow a commercial business that is closed during the winter months.

Doug Lechliden said he serves on the Maryland Agricultural Commission and that Mark Powell from the MDA should be aware of the AAC subcommittee. The next meeting of the subcommittee is June 24, 2015.

**MAEF Mobile Science Lab built for Montgomery County and rotated to 30 Montgomery County Elementary Schools each year.**

The MCPS has agreed to make arrangements for the moving the Mobile lab from one school to the next. This will make the coordination of the program much easier since the MCPS has all the information and staff to address the specific needs for located the lab and hooking the lab up to electric and water connections.

Doug Lechlinder asked what materials specific to Montgomery County will be offered in the Lab. Jeremy said he is working on a GIS map that simply shows the Agricultural Reserve Boundary, the Public lands, the major roads and all of the elementary schools in the County. The Explore the Agricultural Reserve brochure has been discussed as another resource for the Lab. This brochure was developed by MCA, MNCPPC, Wholefoods, and the County DED-Agricultural Services. Jeremy said the children must be able to comprehend the information and he acknowledged that he can be too technical for children to understand what he is saying.

### **Farm Tour and Harvest Sale July 25-26, 2015.**

Jeremy said the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Farm Tour is coming up and that the brochure outlining the 19 farms will go to the printer next week. Josh Penn offered to promote the farm tour on the MNCPPC social media outlets. Cindy Gibson also offered the County Council to help promote the event.

### **New Appointments to the AAC**

Patrick Jamison to replace Tim McGrath  
Debbie Benson requested reappointment  
Jim Frazer did not respond

Replacement for Charlotte Ruppert McGhee- The following folks were suggested:

David Stadler, Lisa Stadler-She may live in Fredrick Co.,

Marla Luther-Income requirement may be an issue

Londel Luther- Income requirement?? Very young children may prevent attendance

Hallie Butler- She may be interested-

Shelby Stabler-Pleasant Valley Farms-Still in School-Senior at Hood College

Peter Driscoll -Dogwood Hill Farm-301 349-5429

### **Future of Department of Economic Development**

The County Council PHED Committee will be conducting work sessions on the Executive's Bill 25-15 on June 18 and 22, 2015. Leaders of the agricultural community will be attending the work sessions to address any questions pertaining to the new Office of Agriculture. The issue that remains pertains to the administrative capacity of the new Office that will function as a separate Executive Branch agency. There is a proposal to allow some of the staff from the DED-Finance and Administration Division to continue providing administrative, budget, personnel, and procurement assistance to the new Office of Agriculture. However this proposal is still pending and will need to be approved by several folks in the Administration.

The Committee also discussed how the marketing and promotion of agriculture was originally listed as a responsibility of the Economic Development Corporation-EDC and not part of the Office of Agriculture. The farmers suggested to the County Executive that an agricultural representative be appointed to the Board of Directors and the County

Executive disagreed. Eddie Kuhlman questioned why the EDC cannot have an agricultural representative appointed to the Board of Directors since the Agricultural Reserve encompasses one third of the County and agriculture contributes over \$287 million to the County's economy. Jeremy said the County Executive explained there are many applications from all types of business owners that have applied to be members of the EDC Board of Directors already.

The Bill 25-15 will be acted on during the first weeks of July 2015 before the Council goes on summer recess.

**The Weitzer Family featured at the King Barn Dairy MOOseum**

David Weitzer said his family dairy Beneva Farms will be featured at the King Barn Dairy MOOseum on June 28, 2015. David invited everyone to attend.

**Next Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting June 16, 2015 7:00 pm Room A.**  
Motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm