

Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)

Minutes of December 18, 2012

Attendance: David Weitzer, Linda Lewis, Tim McGrath, Jane Evans, Drew Stabler, Charlotte Ruppert, Debbie Benson, David Heisler, Ben Allnut, Chuck Schuster, Gary Marx, Robert Beall

Guests: Jane Seigler

Staff: Jeremy Criss, Katherine Holt

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm.

Introductions: Introductions were not necessary

Approval of Minutes November 20, 2012:

The Committee was asked if any changes or corrections were needed to the AAC minutes from November 20, 2012. David Weitzer said the word beekeeping and beekeepers should appear as one word. Hearing no additional changes Drew Stabler motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, and Jane Evans seconded the motion and it passed.

Orientation for new AAC Members

The Committee reviewed the draft AAC Annual Report for 2012 that included a new section on Glossary of Terms-Definitions that can help orient new AAC members. Charlotte Ruppert asked about the new section that started on page 27 of the draft report. Charlotte suggested that the County Council Committees-Planning Housing and Economic Development-PHED and Zoning Text Amendment-ZTA should also be listed. Gary Marx suggested the map of the Agricultural Reserve should be included in the report. Charlotte asked if there was a map on line and the Agricultural Services web site was offered to the Committee to access the map on line.

Update on the Zoning Rewrite Process:

The Committee was updated on the correspondence to the Planning Board that the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-APAB regarding the proposed overlay zones for TDR and BLT receiving areas. The APAB is encouraged that TDR overlay zones will not include a public benefit that enables 1 TDR to equate to 4,500 square feet of mixed use space. This proposal represents a fundamental change to how TDRs are used in receiving areas and it will increase demand for using TDRs. The Planning Board will finalize their recommendations on the Zoning Rewrite Process in January and forward their report to the County Council. Gary Marx asked if the public benefit for using TDRs will result in the preservation of farmland the Committee responded yes. David Weitzer asked for the concept of Euclidean zone to be explained to the Committee and staff stated the Rural Density Transfer-RDT Zone represents the base zone or legally designated Euclidean zone.

Farming At Metro's Edge FAME Conference:

The Committee reviewed the proposed program for the FAME conference scheduled for January 11-12, 2013 including the lists of panelists. The Committee felt that each panel was represented well by an agricultural-farmer representative. David Weitzer encouraged everyone to attend the FAME conference and participate in the panel-round table discussions. Drew Stabler asked for a copy of the proposed questions that he suggested for panel #3. David Heisler asked if the panelists were going to meet or talk prior to the Conference and the Committee learned that a conference call was going to be scheduled prior to the conference for each panel and the panelists that were assigned. The Committee learned that Channel 9 News was going to schedule during their noon news program an announcement on the FAME Conference and interview Royce Hanson. Chuck Schuster said that UME has included a promotional article in their Newsletter and on their Face Book page. Jane Seigler said she attended a LEAD symposium on Agriculture and that 240 people attended and it was a very productive conference.

Discussion on County Council Bills:

The Committee learned that the County Council has scheduled three Bills that will impact the rural and agricultural communities. The Committee was asked to turn to the agenda which listed the three County Bills.

Bill 34-12 Stormwater Management-Water Quality Protection Charge:

The Committee learned the DEP is amending the way in which the Water Quality Protection Charge will be applied and the DEP is recommending a new Tax Credit for residents that implement conservation practices like rain barrels attached to their down spouts and an exemption for people that prove economic hardship. The Committee was informed that the Montgomery Soil Conservation District was taking the lead on this Bill due to the proposal the MSCD submitted to DEP requesting a portion of the Water Quality Protection Charge be distributed to the MSCD so they can further promote and implement conservation practices on rural and agricultural properties.

Bill 41-12 Streets and Roads-Roadside Trees-Protections:

The Committee discussed how this Bill 41-12 is similar to the Bill 16-12 that was introduced last year and the public hearing was held on June 12, 2012. The Bill 41-12 will require a Roadside Tree Work Permit be obtained for any tree that is trimmed or cut down. The only exception in the Bill pertains to tree trimming and routine maintenance done by a public utility. The Committee discussed this Bill 41-12 further and they recommended a letter from the AAC be forwarded to the Council advocating the suggestion from Council member Nancy Floreen that different standards for trimming trees on rural roads versus urban roads need to be proposed because these roads are not the same. Hearing on additional comments Gary Marx motioned for the AAC letter to be drafted, Ben Allnutt seconded the motion and it passed. *Please note that Jeremy needs to*

huddle up with Linda Lewis regarding the October 5, 2012 incident of the Lewis Orchard truck on Randolph Road.

Bill 35-12 Trees-Canopy Conservation:

The Committee learned that the DEP has proposed amendments to the Forest Conservation Law under Chapter 22A of the County Code. The Bill is designed to impact anyone that needs a commercial sediment control plan and the Bill will charge additional fees for additional trees that are being cut down. Linda Lewis asked if the Bill will impact the cutting down of fruit trees and the staff responded no. Drew Stabler asked if the Bill would impact a hedge row being pushed down to expand the production capacity of growing field crops and the staff responded no. Jeremy Criss said he needs to read the Bill 35-12 again to better understand the exemptions section and the impact on agricultural operations. The Bill needs to be clear regarding the impact on farming activities. Staff said that the current exemptions in the Law 22A-5 need to be clearly addressed and understood in the proposed Bill. The Committee agreed for staff to work with David Weitzer on a letter from the AAC regarding any concerns the Bill will have on agriculture.

David Weitzer attended the Annual Meeting of MCA:

David Weitzer said that he attended the Annual meeting of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance and they presented an Annual Report summarizing their accomplishments. David said the list of accomplishments was extensive and very informative. David specifically discussed the New Farm Pilot Project initiated by the DED and led by Sarah Miller. The MCA received funding from the DED to help expand their Farm link program to help connect interested farmers with property owners interested in making their properties available to start growing table food crops.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm.

The next meeting of the AAC is January 15, 2013@ 7:00 pm in Germantown.

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