

Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee
Agenda
June 15, 2021

1. Call the Meeting to Order-Introductions: **Prayers for Lonnie Luther**
2. Approval of the May 18, 2021 AAC meeting minutes.
3. COVID-19 Update:

Montgomery County started to reopen County Buildings on Monday June 7, 2021. We have developed a plan to open the Agricultural Activities Center to agricultural agency employees.

The County Executive wants all County employees vaccinated before opening County buildings.

We encourage all agricultural employees to be vaccinated. UME, OAG, MSCD, NRCS, FSA etc. Employees that are not able to telework will return to the office building.

Employees that can telework will develop a schedule for days assigned at the office verses telework days and approved by their managers.

We are still developing a plan to open the Agricultural Activities Center to the public and volunteers.

64.7 % of the County's population have received one dose of the vaccine and 56.4% are fully vaccinated.

[Data - COVID-19 Information Portal - Montgomery County, Maryland](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/Data-COVID-19-Information-Portal-Montgomery-County-Maryland)
(montgomerycountymd.gov)

1. The Department of Environmental Protection Legislative Proposals:

Individual Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Systems-The proposed legislation has still not been introduced. In response to the OAG concerns surrounding the language on lines 158-170, the Director of DEP has stated they will delete the language below entirely and he said, "We think we can make significant progress without that provision." *Please see the attached report outlining septic regulations in surrounding counties in Maryland.*

[(d) Emergency authority. If the Director or the Director of Environmental Protection finds that the condition of an individual sewage disposal system presents an immediate danger to the public health or safety because of an unsafe condition or poor maintenance,

the Director may take any needed action to protect the public and make the system safe, including entering the property to make any needed repair. The County must assess any cost incurred as a result of the Director's or the Director of Environmental Protection's actions against the owner of the system. The County may collect the costs in the same manner as real property taxes are collected against the property where the individual sewage disposal system is located. In addition, the County may seek reimbursement under any other method legally available to collect debts owed to the County.]

Introduction of Bill 16-21-Environmental Sustainability – Building Energy Use Benchmarking and Performance Standards – Amendments to Chapter 18 Environmental Sustainability. The Office of Agriculture recommends that all existing and new agricultural buildings be added to Section 18A-38B Applicability and exempt from the bill. ***There is a public hearing scheduled on July 20, 2021 and the agricultural organizations should provide a letter outlining that all existing and new agricultural buildings should be exempt from this Bill 16-21.*** [2707 1 14390 Bill 16-2021 Introduction 20210504.pdf](#)

Electric Lawn Care – The proposed legislation has still not been introduced. The Office of Agriculture is consulting with the DEP on the scope of the legislation. The legislation proposes a Sale Prohibition and Use Prohibition starting in 2025 for residential gasoline lawn mowers with a deck less than 30 inches including gas trimmers and gas blowers. The legislation excludes gasoline chain saws. The legislation proposes the commercial sale and use of gasoline lawn mowers with decks less than 100 inches starting in 2027.

2. Update on the gravel portion of River Road. We received notice from DOT that on Friday May 28, 2021, they are working with an independent contractor to physically take core samples of gravel from River Road itself in 12 locations to test for asbestos like the way Linda Lewis did her testing in the fall of 2019 which found asbestos. The Office of Agriculture is working with MNCPPC on a technical update of the Rustic Road Master Plan to explore how the significant feature of gravel can be addressed from a public health and safety issue.

3. Update on the FY22 Operating Budget for the Office of Agriculture- **The Council appropriated an additional \$25,000** to cover how the Matching Grant Cost Share program reimbursements from MARBIDCO uses the OAG appropriation and when MARBIDCO reimbursements are deposited into the General Fund, this funding does not come back to the OAG; And to explore a new FTE full time position assigned to the OAG be discussed during the summer.
4. Update on Leaf-gro that is provided by Maryland Environmental Service that many farmers use annually as a soil amendment. Senator Chris Van Hollen' staff are helping to address this leaf-gro issue of colored ink in the bags. While we understand that MDA must follow USDA-National Organic guidelines, their adherence to such a strict interpretation is not logical based on the information we have presented. (80 pounds of color ink for every 60,000 Tons of yard trim material) The MDA is not going to question the NOP guidelines and risk forfeiting the ability to issue organic certifications. The Sugarloaf Citizens Association-SCA has created a sub-committee to consider reducing the size of trucks below 40-yards that deliver leaf grow to farmers.
5. The Annual Farm Tour Weekend in July usually brings out thousands of people to the County farms. The Office of Agriculture has replaced this year's Farm Tour with the following opportunities:

[Grape and Grain Tour story and route Final with Doc Waters.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)
[Final_Revive_Sunday_Drive.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)
[2pg_Farm2Feast_Tours.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

6. MD Farm Bureau and MCFB Farmside Chats:

Food Resiliency - Tuesday, June 8th at 9:30 AM - Butler's Orchard-Productive conversation and good turnout.

Livestock Processing & Grain Farming - Thursday, July 1st at 9:30 AM - Seneca Ayr Farm

Deer Damage - Thursday, August 5th at 7 PM - Jamison Farm

Forest Banking - Wednesday, September 8th at 9:30 AM - Willard Family Farm

Ag Reserve Solar - Wednesday, October 6th at 9 AM - Rockhill Orchard

7. Thrive 2050 Public Hearing with County Council-June 17 and 29, 2021
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2021/20210615/20210615_16D.pdf

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

Montgomery Soil Conservation District-June 11, 2021 9:00 am

Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-June 15, 2021

Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors- July 6, 2021 7:00 pm

Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-July 13, 2021 7:00 pm

MCPS/CBF-Connecting Farmers with Teachers-August 12, 2021

Montgomery County Agricultural Fair- August 13, 2021 through August 21, 2021