

History of Agricultural Programs in Montgomery County

- 1917 The University of Maryland-Land Grant College creates the Cooperative Extension Service-CES in accordance with the 1914 Smith-Lever Act approved by the US Congress. The Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service is a stand alone agency.
- 1945 State Enabling legislation was passed in 1937 to create Soil Conservation Districts within COMAR under Agriculture Title 8-Soil Conservation. The Montgomery Soil Conservation District-MSCD is officially organized in 1945 to direct and manage soil erosion control programs using local citizens participating voluntarily in planning and installing conservation practices. The MSCD was organized by 5 local farmers including George Lechluder who is currently Chairman of the current Board of Supervisors. MSCD is a stand alone agency.
- 1970 The Office of Community and Economic Development existed. At the request of the Montgomery County farmers William "Billy" Anderson, Rene Johnson, Ph.D. AREC, was the first Agricultural Coordinator for the Division of Economic and Agricultural Development. The farmers specifically requested a position within the County Government where Rene would be the eyes and ears of farmers inside of the County and to represent the interests of farmers at the table of government.
- 1972 The County goes through reorganization and Cooperative Extension Service-CES is incorporated into the Montgomery County Department of Family Resources-DFR.
- 1973 Council Resolution No. 7-1138 created the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Council Resolution No. 7-1387 appointed the first members to the AAC.
- 1974 Montgomery Weed Control, (Not for profit corporation), was created at the request of the County Government and Thompson Butz, Chair of the AAC Chapter 49.
- 1976 Council Resolution No. 8-705 restructured the AAC to 15 members.
- 1977 Montgomery County Farmers Market Association, Inc. is created at the request of Thompson Butz, Chair of the AAC.
- 1980 The County goes through reorganization and the Office of Economic Development-OED was created. The Division of Economic and Agricultural Development was eliminated. Marie Friedman, Division Chief Strategic Planning assumes oversight of Rene Johnson, Agricultural Coordinator.

- 1980 The County Council adopted Chapter 2B Agricultural Land Preservation which created the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-APAB and County participation in the MALPF.
- 1981 The Agricultural Reserve-Rural Density Transfer –RDT Zone was created by the County Council Chapter 59.
- 1983 The Montgomery County Council dedicated funds to build an Agricultural Activities Center to house all the agencies with ties to the agricultural sector in the County. The Derwood Ag Activities Center was completed and occupied in 1987.
- 1985 The US Congress adopts a new Farm Bill that must be enacted every 5 years. One of the primary changes to the 1985 Farm Bill was a requirement that in order for farmers to receive benefits from the federal government, farmers must establish and maintain a Soil and Water Conservation Plan on their farm. Prior to 1985, cooperation between farmers and the MSCD was entirely voluntary. The action spurred many farmers that had not participated with Soil Conservation to do so and fostered a much closer working relationship with the agencies charged to provide services to the farm community.
- 1985 Rene Johnson, Agricultural Coordinator retired from the County. Rene saved the Economic and Agricultural Development Division Sign so that the history of the Division would be preserved.
- 1985 Tim Warman was hired as Agricultural Resources Coordinator Grade 23.
- 1988 The County Agricultural Easement Program-AEP was created by the County Council by Bill 56-87 Chapter 2B and Executive Regulation 28-88AM.
- 1988 Jeremy Criss hired as Agricultural Preservation Program Administrator Grade 23.
- 1991 The County Agricultural Easement Program-AEP’s Executive Regulations were revised and codified as Executive Regulation 66-91.
- 1992 Tim Warman, Agricultural Programs Manager Grade 25 left Montgomery County and told Jeremy to keep the Economic and Agricultural Development Division Sign.
- 1993 Jeremy Criss (Planning Specialist-Grade 23) assumed the responsibilities of both positions (Agricultural Programs Manager and Agricultural Preservation Administrator).
- 1994 The County goes through reorganization and the CES was moved from the DFR and incorporated into the Department of Environmental Protection-DEP.
- 1994 Douglas Duncan was elected as County Executive.

- 1995 Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC submitted to County Executive Duncan the “Future of Agriculture Study” recommending creation of high level Agriculture Preservation Advocate (APA).
- 1996 The County goes through reorganization and Department of Economic Development was created including the Division of Agricultural Services mandated to provide financial assistance and support for the MSCD and University of Maryland-Extension Chapter 2-64L.
- 1996 The MSCD and CES were incorporated into the Montgomery County Department of the Economic Development-DED-Agricultural Services Division. The MSCD and Extension have resided within the DED since 1996.
- 1996 The County Council created the Vendors Program for site specific vendors selling certified agricultural products in the right-of-way Chapter 47-2(c) (1) (2).
- 1997 Jeremy Criss is promoted to Agricultural Services Manager Grade 27 – Program Manager.
- 1997 John Zawitoski was hired as Farmland Preservation Administrator Grade 23 – Planning Specialist. Today John Z. is a Senior BDS Grade 27.
- 2003 The County Council adopted the Fuel Energy Tax Relief Program for certified Ag Producers Chapter 52-14.01.03
- 2004 The Deer Donation Program was created as a non-competitive contract to reduce deer herds on farms and donate deer meat to people in need.
- 2005 The County celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Agricultural Reserve with a commemorative map and event at Butler’s Orchard.
- 2007 The County Council adopted Bill 12-07 creating a real property disclosure for anyone purchasing property in the Agricultural Reserve to acknowledge that agriculture is the primary use and all other uses are secondary to farming.
- 2008 The County developed and installed the Welcome to Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve Signs along State Roads with high visibility.
- 2009 Montgomery County achieved the Phase I Goal of protecting 70,000 acres of farmland under easements for future food and fiber production.
- 2009 Council Bill 39-07 was adopted repealing and reenacting Chapter 2B of the Montgomery County Code to conform to changes in State Law and creation of the Building Lot Termination Easement Program and promulgating Executive Regulation 3-09AM and Executive Order 137-13 for administering both AEP and BLT programs.
- 2012 The County Executive announced the New Farmer Project that is now in its third year and 20 plus individuals have enrolled in annual trainings.

2014 The County Council adopted ZTA 13-04 Zoning Rewrite which significantly updated the County Zoning code and created greater clarification and accessory uses to farming permitted by right. The RDT zone was changed to the Agricultural Reserve-AR zone.

2015 The County starts the first season for the New Equipment Share Program.

Summary: For the past 18 years the Agricultural Services has been a Division within the DED where the Manager reports to the DED-Director to address the needs of farmers and the business of agriculture. The Agricultural Services Manager is currently designated MLS II. Agricultural Programs and Services may be impacted once again by the reorganization of the County and the proposal to eliminate the DED and create a Private Economic Development Authority-EDA.

To avoid confusion within the agricultural community the farmers recommend the County Executive meet with leaders of the agricultural groups (AAC, APAB, MSCD, MCFB, MAP) so farmers can ask questions regarding the EDA and participate in the discussion and creation of the EDA. Considering the history of the agricultural programs in the County the response from the agricultural community may be negative. The history shows how farmers expressed the need for Agricultural Services under the purview of County Government. The agricultural programs and services are very complicated. Educating managers and residents that are insensitive to the challenges of farmers will be difficult to get the message across and this outcome may negatively impact agriculture, farmers, and the ability to manage Ag Services. Farmers need help in navigating the County's complicated and stringent land use and zoning regulations and permitting process. *If William "Billy" Anderson was still with us he would say farmers need someone as their go to person that speaks the language of farmers and also understands the internal workings of County Government.*

Specific Questions Regarding Reorganization of DED

We need the reorganization of DED in writing to help better understand how all the DED-Divisions will be impacted:

Sally Sternbach	Marketing and Business Development
Peter Bang	Finance Administration
Tina Benjamin	Special Projects
Barbara Kauffman	Work Force Services
DeVance Walker	Business Empowerment
Jeremy Criss	Agricultural Services

A detailed list was prepared summarizing the programs and services offered by the Ag Services including the program name, purpose and impact, mandate-guideline, funding mechanism and legal-fiscal issue. It will be helpful to understand how these regulatory responsibilities of Ag Services will function under the EDA? How can we further assist the decision makers to understand the complexities of these legal and programmatic components of Ag Services?

Who will the Agricultural Services Manager report to and who will be the immediate supervisor?
Who will approve Time cards and evaluations?

How will personnel issues or actions be handled under the EDA?

When there is a specific agricultural initiative that needs attention, will the Ag Services Manager be required to gain support from the EDA before moving forward? Alternatively stated, if the EDA management does not support the position of the Ag Services Manager to address the needs of farmers can he inform the AAC so a recommendation to the CE can be developed? How will the farmer's maintain a "voice" at the table of government if their staff is no longer within the County Executive Branch?

Will the Agricultural Services Web site continue to be located on the County Portal? If not, then how will the access to County information on programs and services be managed under the EDA?

When there is an agricultural initiative or issue scheduled on the County Council agenda will the Ag Services Manager be required to obtain approval to represent the interests of the agricultural community in County Government?

The Agricultural Advisory Committee serves as a bridge between the County government and the agricultural sector in order to coordinate local government services in rural areas and to provide advice on issues impacting the County's rural and agricultural areas. How will the EDA change the mandate of the AAC?

The Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board is a standing committee authorized by State Law and oversees the County's programs that protect farmland for future generations and APAB makes recommendations to State and County officials regarding farmland preservation issues. How will the EDA change the mandate of the APAB?

The Montgomery Soil Conservation District is a political subdivision of the State. We do not know if, as a public entity, MSCD can legally be affiliated within a private EDA structure. The same questions may apply to University of Maryland-Extension.