

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
June 21, 2016

Attendees: Chuck Schuster, Jane Evans, Doug Lechliden, Pete Driscoll, Aliza Fishbein, Linda Lewis, Dennis Kamber, David Weitzer, Patrick Jamison

Staff: Jeremy Criss

1. Meeting called to Order and Introductions-7:04 PM
2. Approval of the May 10, 2016 AAC meeting minutes-approved as corrected. Evans/Lewis
3. **Update on the Office of Agriculture-OAG:**

The OAG is supposed to function independently starting July 1, 2016. Stay tuned for details.

OAG is not yet listed as an independent agency on the County website. This should change soon. Jackie Arnold will move to the Derwood Office on July 15, 2016. (please note the Jackie will be moving to the OAG on *July 25, 2016 now*).

Jeremy attended his first senior management team meeting with other directors of agencies whom the Executive appointed. Both operating and capital budgets have been approved by the council. Outstanding items on the budget are for preservation, continuing discussions on getting water quality charge money. DEP an OAG will report back to the Council later this summer or early fall.

TMDLs – Are part of the Chesapeake Bay Clean Up plan and every County in the State were given Nutrient Reduction Goals necessary to achieve the desired TMDL for reporting requirements. Montgomery County hasn't reported yet the nutrient goals as part of the County's MS4 permit. They want to work with farmers for nutrient/soil management for farmland preservation. DEP has conveyed that they have a reporting issue, with 1-3 years of backlogs, which need to be addressed. The OAG will be showing Lisa Feldt, DEP Director and the staff in charge of water quality and storm water management how the farmers may be able to assist the DEP through short term nutrient trading scenarios. If farmers want to participate in nutrient trading, they first need to do a baseline assessment by contacting the MSCD. There are 3 farms with completed base line assessments and 3 farms are pending. OAG and DEP will develop process and documents for short term nutrient trading.

4. **New Improvements and Communication Systems at the AHFP**

The construction for Comcast Business Service scheduled to begin June 17, 2016.

**The Federal network for FSA and NRSC has been up and down for four weeks.
The Federal Government wants to maintain the T-1 lines that do not always work.
The Federal Government wants new voice over internet phones that can only work if their network actually works.
All phone numbers for agricultural agency staff will be the same.
The existing Verizon T-1 lines will be replaced for OAG, UM-Extension and the MSCD.
The FSA, NRCS and MDA will maintain their existing Verizon T-1 lines.**

Comcast broke ground on the new Comcast line. The MDA may migrate to Comcast Business Service, which would help OAG on their cost estimate. While they are moving some agencies at the Farm Park, they are trying to organize them together and keeping their phone numbers the same.

5. Update on the Sugarland Road Pilot Project for Broad Band

**The Comcast Company has decided to build the infrastructure in the pilot area for free.
Hard working neighbors including (David Weitzer and Dennis Kamber) have achieved a total of 84 Expression of Interest Forms.
There is total of 95 residents in the area that includes 15 businesses.
The AAC and OAG will begin discussions with other interested Ag Reserve communities.
We need a group of neighbors in each community that are willing to make this happen.**

Comcast agreed to build the infrastructure in the pilot area for FREE. Dennis and Dave were the ones who worked on this with the county cable office. The project will be built and we will get updates as it progresses. The long term goal is to use this as a model and expand it to other areas in the Agricultural Reserve. Jeremy provided addresses to Margie Williams, County Cable Manager, so she can come up with a map for a new area for expansion in the future. There are many happy neighbors along Sugarland Road!

6. Agricultural Advisory Committee need for new farmer members

We are still looking for more new farmer members to serve on the AAC to replace the following folks: Drew Stabler, Jane Evans, David Heisler

**David Weitzer requested a waiver for a third term
Eleanor Leak requested a first term**

Jeremy asked the Executive to move forward on confirming the new members who want to be on the AAC. There will be two farmer member vacancies. Jeremy followed up with Connie Latham, the County Executive staff assigned to boards and committees. He provided the page from the 1980 Plowing New Ground Master Plan publication showing

that Drew Stabler and Dave Weitzer served on two different boards at the same time. Jeremy is waiting to hear back on this regarding upcoming term eligibility. On April 19th, the AAC requested from the Executive an exception to the policy so that agriculture members could serve on more than one board at a time. *(Please note that Jeremy understands that Chapter 2 Administration would need to be changed to reflect the recommendation of the AAC for farmers to serve on more than one board or committee at the same time).*

7. ZTA 16-02 Agricultural Zone-Transferable Development Rights Requirements

**The ZTA has yet to be scheduled on the Planning Board agenda-Stay Tuned.
The OAG may be asked to provide recommendations to the DPS and the MNCPPC on all requests for farm tenant dwellings.**

This was the ZTA that created a stir in Jan/Feb regarding a requirement for having a TDR retained for farm tenant dwellings. Jeremy emailed Josh Penn today asking to be notified when it comes up for discussion so we'll know and can go to the Planning Board to give our input. In a meeting in April, Dave represented the AAC, Paula the Farm Bureau, Bob Cissel represented MAP, Michael Jamison APAB, and MCA and SCA also met with staff at the time. *(Please note that the MNCPPC staff has said they hope to have a draft ZTA distributed to everyone by mid-September).*

8. 27th Annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale event-July 23 & 24, 2016

**The OAG is preparing for the 27th Annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale and there are 21 farms featured. Chris Zawitoski is interviewing all of the farm tour-farmers and posting feature stories for each farm on our web site and face book page.
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/AgServices/agfarmtour.html>**

All of the farmers will also participate in the Farm Tour Trading Cards promotion. Please see the attached card that was drafted for Lewis Orchard. The OAG is working to print 5,000 copies of each card and distribute them to each farm for the children to collect from the farmers. We are still working on the terms for 1st 2nd and 3rd place prizes.

Lots of progress has been made in preparation for the farm tour. All 21 farmers were interviewed and photographed. There is a one-page feature story on the farm, history, what kind of farm, how long the family has been farming, etc., for each farm. There are 6-7 of the feature stories already posted on the OAG website. They will all be posted by the end of this week. Linda's card is included in our agenda packet. Jeremy reviewed the tour brochure proof today and it will be finalized tomorrow. 7,000 copies will be printed, 5,000 copies of the trading cards. Each farmer will have 1,000 of their cards for farm tour weekend, and there will be a contest for the card collectors. The remaining cards will be distributed during the County Ag Fair in August and Close Encounters with

Ag in the Fall. The OAG is already promoting the farm tour on Facebook and Twitter. Visit Montgomery and Montgomery Visitors Bureau are promoting it.

9. County Council Proclamation-Drew Stabler-Good Steward Award-National Corn Growers Association

The County Council-George Leventhal to honor Drew Stabler of Sunny Ridge Farm for the Good Steward Award from the National Corn Growers Association. Stay tuned.

The event will be rescheduled for a later date. When Jeremy knows he will notify us. Perhaps, it will be one of the things done at the Ag Leaders Luncheon.

10. Recommendations from the AAC Sub-committee:

Micro-Alcohol Production Facilities- Fruit and Grain based Alcoholic beverages.

Limited Use Standards for Private Events on farms including food.

Jeremy was asked where the number of participants and spectators for private events came from. It came from the zoning code for equestrian facilities, so that when developing limiting use standards for private farms he can point to something the Council can acknowledge that's already in the code. There are types of events (major, minor, informal, and event) events with tiers of numbers of people. That's where Jeremy came up with the standards for participants at private events. Jeremy will send out one more notice to the sub-committee, soliciting input about what he prepared for the standards.

11. ZTA 16-04 Agricultural Reserve (AR) Zone- Transitory Uses

This ZTA will remove the prohibition for Food Trucks and Food Trailers from locating on farms encumbered by Transferable Development Rights TDR easements. The Planning Board work session was June 16, 2016 and they recommended approval. The County Council Public hearing is scheduled for June 21, 2016 at 1:30 pm.

The ZTA will allow food trucks to be located on farms encumbered by TDR easements. There was a public hearing of the Council with no opposition Last week the planning board scheduled a work session and looks like when it goes to the committee next week it should pass. This will provide greater opportunities for farmers to bring more people to the farm and provide beverages and food. Jeremy drafted the letter from the AAC and the Committee recommended it be forwarded to the Council. Jeremy is also worked with the County Farm Bureau and the Food Council who also wrote letters of support for ZTA 16-04.

12. More Business

County Ag Fair – We'll have the trading cards at the Ag Fair. Chuck suggested that we take the sides off the tent to make it more inviting. Jane suggested that we make the tent a stop on the Junior Board's scavenger hunt. **Jane Please let Jeremy know who to contact to get this done!** Jeremy was hoping to have the "Food, Fiber, and You" lab in place of the showcase lab, but that's impractical because if the "Food, Fiber, and You" lab has to be staffed by a teacher to serve its purpose, that would be an additional cost.

Aliza updated the committee on the progress of the food waste composting bill. Bill 28-16 will be introduced next Tuesday by Councilman Berliner and the public hearing is scheduled for July 19.

Move to Adjourn: (Kamber/Jameson)