



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes-September 18, 2018

Attendance: Doug Lechliden, Pete Driscroll, Ben Allnutt, Ben Butler, Jane Evans, Eleanor Leak, Angie McNally, Linda Lewis, Lori Larson, Michele Cropp

Guests: Steve Robinson

Agenda items are in bold and minutes are not bolded.

1. Called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm
2. Approval of the July 17, 2018 AAC minutes-Jane Evans/Pete Driscroll-As Written
Approval of the August 13, 2018 AAC minutes-Pete Driscroll/ Jane Evans-As Written
3. **Mike Scheffel, started within the Office of Agriculture as the new Farmland Preservation Administrator on September 4, 2018.** Jeremy said that Mike worked for the Maryland Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation District offices in Carroll and Baltimore counties. Jeremy announced the Shelly Ingram Equestrian Outreach Specialist left the County-MSCD on July 30, 2018. The OAG has received approval from the hiring freeze to replace this position. The OAG is working on the recruitment announcement and the questions for applicants to answer. Jeremy asked if anyone knows of someone that may be interested in the job announcement. Lori Larson and Angie asked for the job announcement when it is finalized.
4. **The MNCPPC has begun to update the County's 1964 General Plan-the Wedges and Corridors Plan. Jeremy was interviewed by the planning staff and consultant on August 21, 2018 and a draft of the update will be sent to us for review.** Jeremy explained how the interview was structured and he showed the group several maps of the County from studies that were done in the 1950's. Over the years, several farmers and their families have donated all types of books, master plan documents and maps of the County that Jeremy has logged into the reference room beside his office. A draft of the interview discussion will be provided to Jeremy soon along with next steps.
5. **Jeremy and Kristin organized a community meeting for residents living along the gravel portion of River Road-August 21, 2018 at Lewis Orchard Farm Market. The Director of MCDOT attended and he will conduct a study to determine the costs of: improving drainage and culverts and tar and chip the road surface.** There were about 25 residents that attended the meeting and they had opportunities to discuss their experiences with living and driving along the gravel portion of River Road. Everyone agreed that the gravel surface represents a safety and environmental hazard specially when cars and trucks are driving fast. The wash board effect of the gravel creates a very



dangerous condition for keeping the cars and trucks on road where there are turns. The County DOT was very helpful during the meeting and the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee is in support of having a study conducted to assess the costs for the road improvements along the three-mile gravel portion of River Road south of Whites Ferry.

- 6. Attached, please find the handout documents from the August 29, 2018 meeting that MDA held to review the Chesapeake Bay Water Shed Improvement Program-WIP III Goals. The agricultural agencies are concerned that nutrient reduction goals will increase at a time when farmers are demonstrating real progress on reductions of phosphorous and sediment. The urban sectors need to do more to reduce nutrients that are coming from waste water discharges and nutrients applied in the urban areas.** The turnout for our meeting was the highest attendance in the State for the regional WIP outreach meetings. The farmers were provided with background documents and talking points prepared by the agricultural agencies. There is frustration surrounding how the original WIP model and nutrient reduction goals are not based on reality and therefore the projections are simply wrong. This outcome represents the primary reason why the agricultural community is asking good questions to make the corrections to the WIP model now before we move forward. The MDA will provide the final WIP nutrient reduction numbers once they have assembled all types of operations in the watershed.
- 7. The MCFB Policy Development Committee met on Monday September 10, 2018 and recommend that new and alternative funding for Ag Land Preservation will be their number 1 Top Policy along with removing the State Loophole where developers avoid paying the State Agricultural Transfer tax.** Jeremy explained the process for the County Farm Bureau to remit recommendations to the Maryland Farm Bureau, so they can develop new policies for the 2019 MD Legislative Session. There are policies that will sunset unless recommendations are offered to retain them. There are policies identified as issues of State Concern that Maryland Farm Bureau requests input from the County Farm Bureau and then there are Top Priorities that each County Farm Bureau must provide. This information will be discussed during the MD Farm Bureau Winter Conference in December 2018. Last year when Delegate Eric Luedtke introduced HB 396 and HB 620, the County and State Farm Bureau were not in the loop. This year Jeremy is trying to prevent a repeat of this environment.
- 8. On September 17, 2018 the OAG, DOF, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Delegate Luedtke, will discuss potential legislation for the 2019 MD Legislative Session. The subject is to remove the existing 5 year “look back loop hole” for the State Agricultural Transfer Tax where developers avoid paying this State Agricultural Transfer Tax used for farmland preservation. This internal discussion is needed to determine whether this approach is politically possible.** Jeremy and the OAG staff showed other Executive staff examples of farm properties where the State and County Agricultural Transfer Taxes were not paid, and the properties were developed. Delegate Luedtke may be proposing legislation for the 2019 Session that removes the loophole for developers avoiding paying these Agricultural Transfer Taxes.
- 9. The Full Council will conduct a Work Session the ZTA 18-03 Farm Alcohol Production Facilities on September 18, 2018.**
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2018/201>

[80918/20180918_5A.pdf](#) The Full Council final vote on ZTA 18-03 is scheduled for September 25, 2018. Additional amendments may be considered to address the concerns of Montgomery Countryside Alliance and Sugarloaf Citizens Association. The MCA states this ZTA 18-03 is being fast tracked? The ZTA was introduced on April 10, 2018 and the Public Hearing was May 15, 2018 and the PHED Committee Work Sessions were July 9 and 23, 2018. The timeline outlined above represents the normal process for scheduling Zoning Text Amendments. Michele explained the Montgomery County Farm Bureau position on the ZTA for farm alcohol production. Roger Berliner, Sydney Katz and Marc Elrich seem to have concerns about the ZTA although amendments were offered to address some of their concerns. One concern surrounds waiting for the Agritourism Advisory Committee recommendations before acting on the Farm Alcohol Production ZTA. Marc suggested a minimum lot size for only farm brewing and farm distilling. Jessica Snyder did a good job of explaining the challenges of the Agritourism Advisory Committee including how hard it has been to reach agreement on just about everything. Doug Lechliden explained how the ZTA as currently written will prevent farm alcohol production on small properties, but this did not stop some of the Council members from expressing this concern. Lori Larson commented on the MCA urgent notice that went out was sensationalized with the pictures that were included. There was a good turnout of farmers that attended the work session- Robert Butz, Ed Boyce, Doug Lechliden, Susan Butler, Michele Cropp, Jessica Snyder, Phil Muth and Bob Cissel. The final action on the ZTA 18-03 is tentatively scheduled for October 2, 2018.

10. The Agritourism Study Advisory Committee will be reconvening on October 17, 2018 to review the recommendations from the consultant that MNCPPC hired. This meeting will be held at the Up-County Regional Services Center 12900 Middlebrook Road Germantown Room A. Please note the October 17, 2018 meeting is postponed until the MNCPPC staff can complete reviewing the consultant's recommendations.

11. Next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee-October 16, 2018 in Germantown. Please note that all future AAC meetings will be held at the Up-County Regional Services Center-12900 Middlebrook Road Germantown, MD 20874 Room A.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-September 18, 2018 @7:00pm
Ag Advisory Committee-September 18, 2018 @ 7:00pm-Up County Regional Center
MDA Secretary of Agriculture-Farm Tour in MC-September 25, 2018
Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Supervisors-October 2, 2018@ 7:00pm
MD-VA Ag Marketing Professionals conference-October 2-5, 2018 Upper Shore
Williamson County TN Officials, UM-Shady Grove-October 5, 2018