

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

November 18th 2014

Attendees: Jane Evans, Debbie Benson, Doug Lechliger, Drew Stabler, David Weitzer, Eddie Kuhlman, Charlotte McGehee, Michele Cropp, Linda Lewis

Staff: Jeremy Criss

Guests: Laurie Wilmont (UMUC Student)

The meeting was called to order at 7:11PM.

1. Introductions:

With guests present, brief introductions were made.

2. Approval of the AAC Minutes from October 21, 2014

The minutes were approved as corrected (*Stabler/Lewis*)

The meeting began with a moment of silence for AAC member, Paula Linthicum's mother who recently passed away.

3. Jeremy is working to schedule a tour of farms (Pam Saul, Robert Stabler, Wade Butler, David Weitzer) for Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson before December 19, 2014

Montgomery Countryside Alliance has taken Mr. Anderson for farm visits. The farms that MCA visited were all shown in the recent movie produced by the group "Growing Legacy". While this covers some types of farms in Montgomery County, it does not cover commodity farms and Mr. Criss would like to get Mr. Anderson out to some commodity farms. There will be additional tours hopefully scheduled between now and Christmas.

4. Update-Deer Donation-The DED is working to find a new location of the New Cold Box for East side of the County. December 3, 2014 1:00 pm Meeting to discuss ways to improve deer management in the County-Representatives from MNCPPC, DNR, DED and farmers will be attending.

The County's old cold box from the East side of the County has been recycled and is no longer in use. Tommy Linthicum has agreed to keep a new box on his farm if needed. The Laytonsville Fire hall also might be able to take it. The Ag History Farm Park was an option that was considered but that representatives from MNCPPC decided it was a no go. Jeremy is trying to find new spot. Dec. 3 at 1PM discussion on how to improve Deer management.

5. Roger Berliner is scheduling a meeting with stakeholders in December to discuss expanding Broadband high speed internet access to the Agricultural Reserve. Tentative date is December 8, 2014.

The large area outside of Poolesville that does not have access to the internet will be the main subject of the meeting. Ben Allnutt, Danny Kamber, Caroline Taylor and Dave Weitzer will attend.

6. League of Women Voters Agricultural Fact sheet discussion on the SCD Website and requirement for fencing?

A number of issues were raised on a fact sheet given to Mr. Criss by Margaret Chasson. One of the issues identified is that for all horse facilities with more than 10 horses, a letter confirming that a soil conservation plan and a nutrient management plan have been developed and must be kept on file with the County DPS. Currently, there is no such documentation on file for those who have more than 10 horses. Mr. Criss reminded the group that the property owner is responsible for writing a letter or getting Soil Conservation staff to write a letter confirming that they have the required plans in place. The plans can be obtained through the Montgomery Soil Conservation District and the University of Maryland-Extension. The LWV is suggesting that if producers are enrolled in the Fuel energy tax program that reduces the tax rate by 22%, the producer should also have the required plans. If you don't have a soil conservation plan and nutrient management plan then you shouldn't be getting the lower tax rate.

7. Update on the Positions approved for FY15 Operating and Capital Budget:

A brief update on the upcoming positions that were approved in the FY15 Operating and Capital budget was given:

The BDS position – There has been one interview for this position for a person with preferential hiring status. That person was considered to be unqualified and it has been requested to the Office of Human Resources that the interview process continue with the 32 other applicants. We are still awaiting response from OHR.

Agronomy Educator – This position was approved by DED and is now being filled by Doug Tregoning. Mr. Tregoning also has a contract with the State of Maryland that allows him to do things with the County including Close Encounters with Agriculture. His contract with the State expires in December and going forward, we will make sure the State contract does not overlap with the Agronomy Educator responsibilities. Mr. Tregoning will be helpful when it comes to preparing comments on the pesticide legislation.

New Resource Conservationist – The OHR has approved the position to be reclassified to BDS. An e-recruitment ad will be posted within the DED-MSCD as recommended by the MSCD Board of Supervisors. The ad is slated to be released week. James Harne who is currently a MDA State employee is interested in the new County position and it would be good opportunity for him since he has extensive experience with the MSCD and the agricultural community. The new position will build additional capacity in soil conservation.

It was announced that Eddie Franceschi's last day is Friday as he is leaving to be the new Patuxent Watershed Ranger. The Equestrian outreach coordinator he vacated will now need to be filled.

8. The Pesticide Legislation Bill 52-14

More discussion about the proposed Pesticide Bill took place. Mr. Criss began by informing everyone that the email requested by the AAC at the last meeting was written and submitted. He continued to stress the importance of The Farm Bureau going on record with their position on the proposed bill.

Mr. Criss feels as though the bill will be strongly backed and will require significant resistance if it is to be stopped. The farming community seems up to the task. It was noted that Mark Schlossberg has been working with RISE who has hired a lobbyist. Their approach will be to get homeowners to oppose the bill. Grave concerns about how the bill may affect the ability of farmers to be productive and profitable in the future remain.

Action items out of this meetings discussion included:

- Collect Doug Tregoning's notes on the Bill
- Get letter from Weed Control Committees (Noxious weeds) explaining importance of pesticides in controlling weeds.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.