

## **Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)**

### **Minutes of October 18, 2011**

**Attendance:** Jane Evans, David Weitzer, Woody Woodroof, Drew Stabler, Chuck Schuster, Gene Walker, Linda Lewis, Robert Beall

**Guests:** Lois Stoner, Anne Sturm, Jane Seigler

**Staff:** Jeremy Criss

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm.

**Introductions:** Not necessary.

#### **Approval of Minutes 7-19-11:**

Criss asked if any changes or corrections were needed to the AAC minutes from July 19, 2011. Criss said that Eddie Kuhlman needed to be shown as attending the meeting and that the date listed on the top of the minutes should be changed to the 19<sup>th</sup> not the 18<sup>th</sup>. Hearing no additional changes Robert Beall motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, and Linda Lewis seconded and the motion and it passed.

#### **Approval of Minutes 9-20-11:**

Criss asked if any changes or corrections were needed to the AAC minutes from September 20, 2011. Chuck Schuster questioned whether the discussion surrounding Dean Wei could be condensed. Following a lengthy discussion on how to report this discussion, Jane Evans offered the following language. Dean Cheng I Wei provided an extensive presentation on his tenure at the University of Maryland starting in 2005 including where the UME is today with their new Cluster Staffing Plan. Following the presentation from the Dean, there was an extensive conversation including specific questions from those in attendance that continued until 9:45 pm. Drew Stabler motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, Jane Evans seconded and the motion passed.

Gene Walker asked where is Roscoe when you need him? David Weitzer said Roscoe was here somewhere. Jane Evans said she is concerned how the UME budget has been – reduced down by \$1 million. Drew Stabler said he is concerned how the people they hire in UME will need to find their own funding.

#### **Follow Up Surrounding Footnote 48 in the Agricultural Zones and TDR easements:**

Criss asked everyone to turn to the attachment outlining the questions raised to the County Council staff representative Jeff Zyontz and his response. Jeff Zyontz agreed that some of the uses prohibited by the Footnote 48 where properties encumbered by TDR easements can complement agricultural uses. Jeff suggested that some of these uses could be performance based rather than land use specific. Jane Evans said the application

of footnote 48 was too broad and the Zoning Advisory Panel-ZAP for the Zoning Rewrite Process needs to provide comments. Jane Seigler asked for assistance to provide these comments to the ZAP and Criss agreed to draft these comments for Jane. Jane said she would need comments surrounding the following uses: Bed and Breakfast, Solar, Farm Machinery Sales, Storage, and Service that are impacted by footnote 48. The AAC motioned for Criss to assist in drafting specific comments for Jane Seigler who is the agricultural representative on the ZAP.

### **Proposed Horticultural-Agricultural ZTA:**

Criss reviewed the background surrounding the creation of the Horticultural Work Group by the DED and the proposed ZTA that was drafted to address some horticultural and agricultural land uses that currently require special exceptions. Criss said the ZTA attempts to permit some of these uses as a matter of right in the agricultural zones under certain conditions or standards as proposed within the ZTA. The DED is working to schedule a meeting with some County Council members to gain support for the ZTA.

### **Follow up surrounding the UME –AED**

Criss referred to the AAC letter dated Oct. 5, 2011 that was sent to Dean Wei. This letter was in response to the meeting the AAC held with the Dean on September 20, 2011. Chuck Schuster met with the Dean on October 7, 2011 and the Dean told Chuck he would like to request another meeting with the agricultural community to further consider the proposed AED. Chuck said that the Dean proposed to hold the job announcement for the AED until after this meeting with the agricultural community. Criss explained that he has worked with David Weitzer to finalize another letter that is addressed to the Members of the Montgomery County Delegation, the Chancellor and Provost of the University of Maryland, the County Executive and County Council to oppose the proposed UME-AED. It was suggested that this second letter be put on hold because Dr. Nick Place Associate Dean has called David Weitzer to schedule a date and time for another meeting. There was some discussion surrounding whether the Dean wanted Jeremy Criss and Chuck Schuster to attend this second meeting.

Linda Lewis suggested that Jeremy should attend but to keep his mouth closed. Some folks thought that it would be very difficult for Jeremy to not say anything during the meeting. Gene Walker said the second meeting should take place here in the County because he said -why should 12-15 folks drive to campus to meet with only 1-2 folks? Gene agreed that another meeting should take place before the second letter is sent out. Drew Stabler said the meeting should be here in MC and if Jeremy does not attend we should request to record the meeting. It was suggested the UME would not like the meeting being recorded. David Weitzer said he could ask why the Dean does not want Jeremy to be present or alternatively he could not mention anything about it. David Weitzer said he will contact Nick Place to schedule another meeting and to also discuss the need for restoring the Agronomy Position vacated by Doug Tregoning in July 2010.

## **Discussion surrounding BILL 29-11**

George Leventhal sponsored Bill 29-11 which proposes Consolidation and Sunset Dates December 1, 2012 for many County Boards and Committees. The Public hearing was scheduled at 1:30p.m. today and Criss referenced the AAC letter in the packet that was submitted as part of the public record. Robert Beall said the County Council should be thanking us for the time we devote and the recommendations that we provide on agricultural issues in the County. Drew Stabler asked what George is trying to address with this Bill? Woody Woodroof said that he read in the paper that it costs \$3 million for all of the County Boards and Committees and George is trying to reduce the total number of Boards and Committees to help reduce costs associated with them. Woody said the members of the Boards and Committees volunteer their personal time that needs to be included in the discussion. Woody said that if \$20.00-\$25.00 per hour was allocated to the total hours of time volunteered the County could not afford to pay these folks. Gene Walker wondered sometimes if the Council feels we are obstructional. Gene said the AAC has helped him learn how the agricultural community has been dumped on with regulations. Without us they would drive their agenda without any regard to the needs of farmers and the agricultural community. Robert Beall said that we need to hold the County Council accountable for the actions they take. Drew Stabler said the County Council respects the DED and the Agricultural Services Division. Gene Walker said we need the DED and Jeremy as our source of information for what is going on in Rockville. Lois Stoner said George Leventhal will not let this go and she questions whether there is support for the Bill 29-11 with other council members. Jane Evans questioned what the difference is between sunset date and termination.

## **Farmland Preservation Update:**

### **Building Lot Termination-BLT**

Criss said the DED is moving forward to make BLT easement offers to three property owners totaling 308 acres where a total 7 BLTs will be terminated at a total cost of \$1.7 million. The average BLT price is around \$250,000 for these three properties. The BLT easement settlements are scheduled for completion towards the end of this calendar year with one extended into 2012 for income tax reasons.

### **Agricultural Easement Program-AEP**

Criss said the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board is recommending that a AEP easement purchase period be announced after the holidays. The FY 2012 AEP Base Easement Value is recommended at \$1,600 per acre which is lower than the FY 2011 Base value of \$1,700.

## **Update on the Fiscal Year 2013 Operating Budget for DED**

Criss said the FY 2013 budget will be due in the coming month and an estimated reduction of general funds could be as high as 10%. This level of reduction could mean

an additional reduction of \$50,000 in general funds allocated to the Agricultural Services Division.

### **Creation of a Montgomery County Food Council**

Criss said that a private sector Food Council was being created that would help to identify ways to promote local food production and food distribution to those in need. The Food Council will also help to promote better nutrition for all residents and in the County schools. Drew Stabler said this would be a waste of time. Criss said that he hopes the Food Council can help to address the requests from the general public that involve food issues and policies that impact the entire County not just in the Agricultural areas. Criss said a Food Council Coordinator was hired-Claire Cummings and she was selected from a field of 60 people that applied. Woody Woodroof said one of the reasons he asked to be appointed to the AAC involves the need to work together because a lot of people are very interested in getting involved in agriculture. Woody said that we have more common ground than we realize. The Food Council will work on education for everyone in the County to have more access to local food and produce that is grown here. Linda Lewis suggested that she would like the Food Council to help address the problem that she cannot accept a Women Infant Children-WIC coupon at her on-farm market in the Ag. Reserve. Woody said that he would like to see us broaden the scope of agriculture in Montgomery County. Woody said the demand for local food is very high and we need to foster an environment where people come to the County to learn more about local food production. Many people have come here in the hope of starting an agricultural business and they are now gone. Robert Beall said that any agricultural operation or business must be profitable or it will fail. Robert said that he sold his 200 dairy cows because he kept pumping \$10,000 into the business to keep it afloat.

Criss said that he believes that table food production and commodity agriculture can co-exist in the County and that one sector of agriculture should not be done at the expense of another. Woody said there is plenty of land and opportunities in the County to achieve an environment for both table food production and commodity agriculture. Woody said that we need to create some bridges.

Robert Beall suggested the next AAC meeting be scheduled at 7:00p.m. rather than 7:30pm. After additional discussion it was agreed to schedule the next few meetings at 7:00pm.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25p.m.

**2011 Redistricting Plan**  
 Submitted by the Redistricting Commission  
 Approved by the Commission  
 September 9, 2011

