

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board (Thursday, October 13, 2022)
Generated by Lisa Ledman

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:10 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlyn Fraer, Phil Langley, James "Bubby" Norris, Alan Polk, Donna Sasscer, Bruce Young

B. Welcome Guests

Kellie Hinkle, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Lisa Ledman, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Sue Veith, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Caroline King, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development
Viv Marek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
Jamie Raley, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau
John Hartline, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

C. Approval of the August 11, 2022 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from August 11, 2022 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Alan Polk, second Ben Beale

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlyn Fraer, Phil Langley, James "Bubby" Norris, Alan Polk, Donna Sasscer, Bruce Young

3. PRESENTATION

A. None.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Farmers Markets

Subcommittee membership includes Joe Wood, Phil Langley, Scott Bacon, and Phil Dorsey. The Barns at New Market seasonal building is open Monday through Saturday from 9 am until 4 pm. The California Farmers Markets is on Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm until Thanksgiving. The Home Grown Farm Market is open Saturdays only from 9 am until 1 pm. A special Holiday Market is planned for the value-added building of the Barns at New Market on Saturdays from 9 am until 4 pm during the months of November and December until Christmas.

B. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Steve Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood.

The Subcommittee met at the conclusion of the Board meeting to discuss an Unrestricted Lot Request for MALPF File number #18-20-01. The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board voted to approve the request, 2 in favor and 1 against.

C. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership include Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Charles Mattingly, Alan Polk, and Steve Reeves.

No update.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Phil Langley briefed the Board about the low number of crabs, the wild oysters are bouncing back and there is still an issue with the spread of the evasive blue catfish.

B. The Barns at New Market

Donna Sasscer updated the Board that the 3 compartment sink, dishwasher, and ice maker have been installed. The stove is on backorder. The County is working with RC&D to update the parking between the seasonal and value-added buildings.

C. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Donna Sasscer informed the Board that the MALPF Appraisals have visited the FY2023 applicant farms.

D. Rural Legacy

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek told the Board that PTLT was awarded a \$352,000 grant for next year. The land trust is seeking interested landowners to participate in the Rural Legacy Program.

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – Caroline King updated the Board that RC&D was awarded \$500,000 in new funding and the Mattapany Rural Legacy Area expansion was approved. RC&D is in the process of finishing annual monitoring. The Allen easement is anticipated to settle within the month. The Morehouse easement will go to settlement and a new owner will purchase the property at that time.

E. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC)

Donna Sasscer shared that the Regional Agriculture Center Project is currently in the site plan review phase of the inside layout/floorplan.

F. Tax Assessment

Kellie Hinkle informed the Board that the working group to review agriculture tax assessments met in September to share thoughts and ask questions. The next meeting is scheduled for the end of October. University Maryland Law is doing a study of neighboring jurisdictions and how improvements are handled.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Solar Ordinance Text Amendment

On October 4, 2022 the Commissioners of St. Mary's County hosted a Public Hearing to obtain public comment on a proposed ordinance to amend the Code of St. Mary's County, Maryland, Chapter 285, Schedule 50.4, 97.a. Solar, Major, to require Conditional Use approval from the Board of Appeals for projects in the Rural Preservation Zoning District when certain soils or

environmental resources are present; and to add a new Section 51.3.97.b to include the standards necessary to obtain Conditional Use approval. Jamie Raley expressed the Farm Bureau's concern of these proposed changes and told the Board of the Farm Bureau's suggestion of not allowing Solar Major if the property contains more than 50% prime farmland or soils of statewide assistance and making it a conditional use if the property contains less than 50% prime farmland or soils of statewide importance. Donna Sasscer pointed out that for MALPF, soil classification is changed to Class 8 if an area has been graveled or disturbed, possibly that should be considered in this instance as well. The Board indicated their concern of making this change in all zones, and a possible floating zone was discussed. However, since the Commissioners will be making a decision on this matter within the next 6 days, the Board voted to send a letter reaffirming their original decision as stated in a letter to the Commissioners on February 10, 2022, paragraph 2, "Regarding our Solar Major, Utility-scale solar generating systems, we request that the use designation for the Rural Preservation District (RPD) be classified as a "conditional" use (C), rather than as a "permitted" (P) one. A conditional use designation requires final approval by our board of appeals, and therefore allows authorities additional leverage in directing commercial solar utilities toward preferred areas and away from our prime agricultural soils and from Priority Preservation Areas as designated by the St. Mary's County Comprehensive Plan." Motion Phil Langley, and seconded by Kaitlyn Fraer

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlyn Fraer, Phil Langley, James "Bubby" Norris, Alan Polk, Donna Sasscer, Bruce Young

B. Board Member Open Comment Period

Ben Beale shared that the Maryland Agriculture Commission toured the Southern Maryland Area with stops including the Loveville Produce Auction, the Barns at New Market, Westham Butcher Shop, Forrest Hall Farm in St. Mary's County and then traveled to Calvert County for additional stops there. Steve Reeves requested a tour of the Westham Butcher Shop be set up for this Board.

Ben also asked for assistance with the Farm to School Program on October 14, 2022 at Green Holly Elementary School and October 18, 2022 at Town Creek Elementary School. Kaitlyn Fraer stated that the St. Mary's County Public School System purchased bulk local produce for this event and would love to continue to work with individual farmers throughout the school year.

C. Partner Updates

John Hartline announced he was elected as chairman of the Patuxent River Association. The Tri County Council of Southern Maryland has approved Rural Maryland Economic Development Funds and is working with the State of Maryland to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding. Jamie Raley shared that the Farm Bureau has paid for the Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation Lab to visit 4 local public schools and 1 local private school. Mr. Raley also shared that unfortunately the Tech Center has suspended the Agriculture Education Program.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the October 13, 2022 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Phil Langley, second Bonnie Browne

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlyn Fraer, Phil Langley, James "Bubby" Norris, Alan Polk, Donna Sasscer, Bruce Young