

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board
Meeting Date: Thursday, February 8, 2024
Generated by Lisa Ledman
Approved April 11, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:10 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Allison Gaug, Priscilla Leitch, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

B. Welcome Guests

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
Joan Bearden, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau
Susan McQuilken, Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission
Craig Sewell, Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission

C. Approval of the December 14, 2023 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from December 14, 2023 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Bruce Young, second Richard Polk

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Allison Gaug, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

D. Election of Officers

I move to elect Joseph Wood as Chair of the Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board. Motion by Scott Bacon, second Allison Gaug

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Allison Gaug, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

I move to elect Stephen Reeves as Vice Chair of the Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board. Motion by Kaitlin Fraer, second Scott Bacon

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Allison Gaug, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

3. PRESENTATION

No presentation.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Farmers Markets

Subcommittee membership includes Joe Wood, Phil Langley, Scott Bacon, and Phil Dorsey
Priscilla Leitch updated the Board that The Barns at New Market is closed until April 15, 2024 for the parking lot expansion project and installation of Best Available Technology (BAT) Septic System.
The Home Grown Farm Market is open Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm year round.

The California Farmers Markets is closed for the season. The California Farmers Market will reopen on April 27, 2024 Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm.

B. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board met at the conclusion of the Board meeting and approved the MALPF request to cure a previous violation for the Lyon-Appell Property (MALPF File Number 18-04-03)

C. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership includes Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Alan Polk, Michael Sirk and Steve Reeves. No update.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Justin Cheseldine-Gass informed the Board of SB32/HB120 in which Senator Jack Bailey and Delegate Matt Morgan are requesting to expand MARBIDCO funding to watermen.

Richard Polk spoke of the stripe bass restrictions this year and that there will be no trophy season.

B. Forestry Updates

No updates.

C. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Priscilla Leitch updated the Board that DED Staff attended a training session sponsored by MALPF on January 18, 2024. The new Easement Applications will be accepted by the DED Office until April 15, 2024. Joe Wood suggested that parcels less than 50 acres in size be considered for MALPF participation. Sue Veith stated that the St. Mary's County Priority Preservation Area is defined as parcels of 25 acres or more. Lisa Ledman stated that most "farmsteads" do not have development rights to sell to the State. Sue Veith will provide an analysis of properties that would qualify if the acreage was lowered. Lisa Ledman stated that this change would have to occur at the State level as it is a MALPF requirement.

D. Rural Legacy

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek told the Board that PTLT hope to close on the Greenwell (413.57 acre) easement in January 2024.

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – Caroline King shared that the Maryland Board of Public Works approved using Program Open Space Stateside funding for CREP easements and climate resiliency easements.

Bruce Young stated that several landowners are choosing to not participate in the Rural Legacy Program because of the Department of Natural Resources limitations of having a personal gravel pit and the restrictions for clearing forested land for agriculture purposes.

E. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC)

Craig Sewell thanked the Board on behalf of SMADC for sending a letter of support for the RAC Project. Mr. Sewell would like to give a presentation to the Board at a future meeting to discuss the updates to the RAC Project. Mr. Sewell stated that the Maryland Department of Environment has stalled the project for the last 6 months and after a meeting they have agreed to approve the original plan of a grease trap and 2 holding tanks for the facility. 2 additional perc tests will be required and then the project will be bid out for construction (which will hopefully begin in the Fall with an 18 month construction period).

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Boards and Commissions Training

Priscilla Leitch invited the Board members to attend a Boards and Commissions Training to be held on March 13, 2024 at 5:30 pm in the Commissioners Meeting Room.

B. Blue Catfish Study

Pricilla Leitch shared with the Board that a proposal for study was sent to the Board for review. The Consultant is looking for community members to volunteer information during interviews. A sign-up sheet was passed around.

C. Southern Maryland Agricultural and Aquacultural Analysis

Priscilla Leitch told the Board of a similar study which is researching the food distribution chain in Southern Maryland. Ben Beale stated that it is critical for the consultant to connect with the local community so that they are involved and the study will have meaningful results.

D. Board Member Open Comment Period

Bruce Young invited the Board to the Soil Conservation District's Annual Cooperator of the Year Dinner on February 23, 2024 at the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department Social Hall. Members are asked to contact Bruce for more information and to RSVP. This year's Cooperator of the year will be David & Jennifer Paulk and the Contractor of the Year will be Dameron Construction.

D. Partner Updates

Susan McQuilken briefed the Board of an upcoming Acidified Foods Training (March 11, 2024) and Cottage Food Law Workshop (February 22, 2024)

Joan Bearden spoke of legislative updates and the Farm Bureau Hotline.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the February 8, 2024 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Ben Beale, second by Bruce Young

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Allison Gaug, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood