



**Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission**  
**Thursday, April 1 at 9:00 am**  
**Draft Minutes**

- SMADC Members:** Lisa Barge, Joan Bearden, Erik de Guzman, Dan Donohue, Edward Goodman, Amanda Hand, Bill Hitte, Senator Michael Jackson, Linda Jones, Guy Kilpatric, Ronald Marney, Julie Oberg, Barbara Polito, Martin Proulx, Charlie Sasscer Jr., Donna Sasscer, Deana Tice, Steve Wall, Lucille Walker, Mary Wood
- Members Absent:** Senator Jack Bailey, Lisa Barge, Eddie Bowling, Catherine Cosgrove, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Ronald Marney, Hagner Mister, Julie Oberg, Charles Rice, Kelly Swann, Steve Walter
- Staff:** Juliet Glass, John Hartline, Heather Hulse, Susan McQuilkin, Cia Morey, Rachel Norris, Karyn Owens, Craig Sewell, Shelby Watson-Hampton
- Guests:** Gilbert Bowling, Jr., Charles County Commissioner, Gretchen Hardman, Governor's Office, Jaelon T. Moaney, Reg. Dir. for Anne Arundel/So. Md, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen, Audrey Epp Schmidt, Propagate Ventures

**Minutes**

**Dan Donohue made a motion to approve the minutes from March 4, 2021. Senator Michael Jackson seconded, all approved.**

**Guest Presentation – Audrey Epp Schmidt, Director of Business Development - Propagate Ventures**

Director Watson Hampton introduced Audrey Epp Schmidt from Propagate Ventures agroforestry analytics and project development platform; a timely presentation given SMADC's focus this year on Southern Maryland's forestry industry and partnership with Grow & Fortify on a grant to develop a Maryland forestry guide.

Propagate Ventures works with farmers and landowners to help them integrate fruit, nut and timber crops into their existing operations for added revenue streams. PV has developed a 3-step process, starting with holistic management analysis that includes an in-depth view of the farm (soils, average rainfall, infrastructure, equipment, and financial background) and the client's long-term vision and goals. This information results in a 'blue-print' of trees and shrubs suited to the farm landscape and important economic insights – estimated capital expenses, annual operating expenses, yield assumptions, labor needs, infrastructure, and viable market opportunities. Step-2 involves installation and development – specialized technical and labor management strategy (planting, pruning, harvest, milling). Step-3 offers help to connect growers/farmers with third-party capital investors, alternative funding sources (grants),

and agroforestry product sales channels/buyers. A farm in St. Mary's county was highlighted as an example project – a cow/calf operation selling meats to the DC markets, embraced agroforestry to mitigate cattle stress from the summer heat. Benefits of agroforestry and include herd health (maximizing weight gain) and environmental benefits of erosion mitigation, water purification, carbon sequestration and more. A 20-acre minimum is preferred for best outcomes with estimated costs for consultation and blue-print development from 10K to 20K depending on farm size.

### **Director's Report**

**SMADC Budget Announcement** – Director Watson-Hampton was excited to announce SMADC has been added to the Supplemental Budget and is fully funded at \$900,000 for FY'22; SMADC will be able to fully operate programs that have been on hold. Director Watson-Hampton expressed her sincere appreciation and debt of gratitude to Senator Jackson and Senator Bailey for their efforts to secure funding and special thanks to all who advocated on SMADC's behalf, including the Governor's office. The Land Preservation Budget announcement is still pending. Senator Jackson stated it was his pleasure to assist and be a member of the organization; he admires what SMADC has achieved and requested Gretchen Hardman to relay his thanks to the Governor.

On behalf of the board, Chairwoman Wood extended a big thank you to Director Watson-Hampton for her perseverance, tenacity, and commitment to bring attention to our funding needs; her efforts were truly remarkable and helped immeasurably. She remarked that the region's farmers are fortunate to have Director Watson-Hampton working on their behalf and, with our Southern Maryland Delegation and representatives, SMADC has a solid team going forward. Gretchen Hardman concurred that So.MD farmers are very fortunate. Director Watson-Hampton commented that SMADC has a strong foundation of board members and staff and will be looking at ways to solidify permanent funding for SMADC into the future.

**New Conservation Practices** – Director Watson-Hampton shared that new conservation practices are now eligible for cost-share grants and are available through the local Soil Conservation Districts. Eligible practices include 'Silvopasture, Hedgerows, Windbreaks, Pasture Fencing' and other natural barriers to reduce runoff, improve water quality and for carbon sequestration.

**Executive Committee Meeting** – A meeting of the Committee took place on March 8. Members, Director Watson-Hampton, Eddie Bowling, Bill Hitte, Craig Sewell, Mary Wood, Lucille Walker, Susan McQuilkin and Cia Morey discussed the status of the RAC and Amish Butcher Shop. Craig Sewell has developed two flow charts to illustrate the relationship between these facilities, particularly the flow of meat carcasses from the Amish slaughter facility to further processing at the RAC. As the RAC is behind schedule there is a processing void which Craig is working to resolve to keep livestock producers invested. Bill Hitte also recommended that SMADC develop a long-term strategic plan for funding; ideas discussed will be shared with board.

**Maryland Day Celebration** – Typically, during non-COVID times, several receptions are hosted by organizations each day during the legislative session. SMADC partnered with Charlotte Davis, Rural Maryland Council, Maryland Department of Agriculture/Maryland's Best and the Rural Broadband Cooperative to host a 'meet and greet' at the State Capitol to bring attention to continued funding and thank legislators for their support and efforts during the year. The 'meet and greet' took place outdoors on the newly renovated Lawyers Mall. Shore Gourmet Food Truck and Caroline Culinary Arts Center prepared an 'all local' bagged lunch sourced from local farms, and St. Mary's county produced 'Crabby Corn' kettle corn donated by SMADC. The Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House stopped by

and addressed the crowd. The event was the first of its kind during session (and COVID) and was enthusiastically patronized by senators, delegates and staff and has potential to become an annual event.

### **Staff Reports**

**Cottage Food Industry Guidelines Update** – Susan McQuilkin reported SMADC was asked to investigate why certain cottage foods (sourdough and moist breads) were abruptly removed from the Maryland Cottage Food ‘approved’ foods guidelines. The manner and timing of the removal caused hardship for vendors preparing inventory in anticipation of the beginning of the farmers market season. Senator Hester and Delegate Charkoudian were made aware of the issue and requested a meeting with Clifford Mitchell, MDH Director Environmental Health Bureau Prevention and Health Promotion, which took place on March 19. Kevin Atticks and Kelly Dudeck of Grow & Fortify, SMADC Director Watson-Hampton and staff Susan McQuilkin and regional Agriculture Marketing Professional, Cheryl De Berry, were invited to join the meeting and give industry perspective. Director Mitchell confirmed that both iced and moist breads are allowable if ‘verified’ with laboratory testing of pH and water activity. At the close of the meeting representatives from Delegate Charkoudian’s office suggested that a working group of industry stakeholders (present at the meeting) be formed to review forthcoming MDH guidance on cottage food products and address industry concerns. Senator Hester has requested the group reconvene in late April for a status update. Director Watson-Hampton confirmed that two meetings are scheduled to take place this summer with regional marketing professionals to discuss cottage industry foods and on-farm camping restrictions (glamping, hip-camps, on-farm stays, etc.)

**MMM Program Update** – Heather Hulse reported that MARBIDCO is infusing \$167,000 into the program which brings the current FY funding total to over \$389,000 for food insecure Marylanders to be spent with farmers. Close to 50 applications have been received for the 2021 season (including 5 Southern Maryland markets). Currently MMM staff is working through the FY’22 budget process with multiple jurisdiction funders and is cautiously optimistic the program will be funded at the FY’21 level or more. Rachel Norris reported her focus has been assisting with the development of a new guide; MMM released today the Maryland Guide to Accepting Federal Nutrition Benefits at Farmers Markets and Farm Stands – a specific technical assistance document for farmers market managers and vendors that de-mystifies how to accept and implement nutrition benefits and matching programs. Director Watson-Hampton commended program staff for their considerable accomplishments. Since SMADC and MARBIDCO partnered to administer the program, MMM participation is largest the program has experienced to date, a testament to both organizations and staff efforts, and has enhanced SMADC’s reputation across the state when leveraging budget funding requests.

**Maryland FarmLINK** – Karyn Owens reported that SMADC recently applied for a \$20,000 grant in partnership with University of Maryland Extension, components of which will enhance Maryland FarmLINK website operation and outreach. Additionally, a new updated Farmers Market guide with expanded directory of regional farm stands and stores is in development and due to launch in April.

**Farms in Focus Flagship Video** – Director Watson-Hampton shared the latest video in the series “Why We Farm” – a compilation of all 8 videos in the series which will be used for a media launch to promote the series to consumers, schools and educational institutions/programs around the state. She thanked staff Karyn Owens, Susan McQuilkin, and videographers Edwin Remsberg for their work on the project.

**Westham Butcher Shop and Local Meat Processing** – Craig Sewell reported (as was announced at the March board meeting) the Westham Butcher Shop is now USDA approved and is operating under FSIS inspection to slaughter carcasses only, and is not approved to further process, cut and wrap. The USDA stamp is still pending due to factory delays. In the meantime, Craig is working with two local butcher

shops – in Charles County and Calvert to upgrade their facilities from ‘custom exempt’ (not for retail/meats for customer consumption only) to USDA inspected status. Once achieved these facilities will be able to receive USDA carcasses, cut, further process, and wrap meats for retail sales. Craig pointed out that SMADC has an excellent relationship with the USDA, and although USDA inspectors are not supposed to go out on advisory tours our frontline supervisor agreed to tour both butcher shops; one facility has the potential to be elevated to USDA inspected status, the other does not. Craig is working with the owner of the Calvert facility to identify infrastructure upgrades and equipment needs, develop HACCP plans, SOP’s, and other regulatory paperwork, assisting them to submit a grant application to MARBIDCO to fund meat processing equipment. Pending favorable outcomes, it is hoped the Calvert facility (identified as Rowell’s Butcher Shop) could be USDA certified in 3 months.

**RAC** – Weekly progress meetings are ongoing with St. Mary’s Government, the timeline proposed by St. Mary’s for the completion of the RAC is not satisfactory. SMADC and TCC are discussing alternate plans to accelerate the timeline.

**Member Updates** – Members shared news and updates.

### **Adjournment**

**Dan Donohue made a motion to adjourn. Joan Bearden seconded, all approved.**