



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

Thursday, July 6, 2023

APPROVED Minutes

- SMADC Members:** Joan Bearden, Steve Connelly, Dan Donohue, Kayla Griffith, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Martin Proulx, Brian Russell, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons, Tresor Thomas, Caroline Trossbach, Lucille Walker Vice Chair, Steve Wall,
- Members Absent:** Senator Jack Bailey, Lisa Barge, Eddie Bowling, Delegate Brian Crosby, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Ronald Marney, Barbara Polito, Dan Rider, Elizabeth Robinson, Charles Sasscer III, Donna Sasscer, Deana Tice, Mary Wood, Chair
- Staff:** Cristina Berthelot, Kelley Koeppen, Heather Hulsey, Susan McQuilkin, Rachel Norris, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann and Shelby Watson-Hampton
- Guests:** Andrew Bowles, MDA Ag. Inspector for SOMD, Sierra Criste – Financial Programs Associate, MARBIDCO, Cathy Cosgrove, Rachel Jones, MDA Director of Government Relations, Sue Vieth St. Mary's County Interim Agriculture & Seafood Manager, Harrison Palmer, Vice President Prince George's County Farm Bureau, Hans Schmidt, MDA Office of Resource Conservation.

Minutes

Vice Chair Lucille Walker called for a motion to approve the minutes from June 1, 2023. Dan Donohue made a motion to approve the minutes. Delegate Gary Simmons seconded the motion. All approved.

Director's Report

SMADC Commission Protocol/Membership Update – Director Watson-Hampton presented the draft working document 'SMADC Mission, Guidelines, Procedures and Membership' updated with revisions from the June meeting and sought Commission approval to accept the revised protocols as presented. There was no further discussion following a review of recent edits/revisions. **Vice Chair Lucille Walker called for a motion to accept the document as presented. Kayla Griffith made a motion to accept the 'SMADC Mission, Guidelines, Procedures and Membership' as presented; Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved. ACTION: the approved SMADC guidelines will be emailed to the Commission following the meeting.**

August and September Commission Meetings – Director Watson Hampton reminded there will not be a Commission meeting in August. Going forward, Chair, Mary Wood would like to suggest an 'in person only' meeting once a quarter to foster collaboration and networking. Members discussed options and

agreed a hybrid in person with virtual option is preferable for most. **ACTION: Director Watson-Hampton confirmed the September meeting will be hosted at the SMADC office - in person attendance is highly encouraged with optional virtual attendance and voting accepted.**

New Staff Introduction – Chinicka Green-Bey has joined SMADC, taking over from Tori DiVincenzo as the Office Administrator and Grants Coordinator; she brings a wealth of experience working for multiple federal and local government agencies and non-profits.

Sponsorship requests – **The Alice Ferguson Foundation is requesting a sponsorship of \$2,000 to support the ‘Pinot on the Potomac’ on September 9, 2023, to benefit the Foundation’s environmental programs.** Dan Donohue confirmed sponsors receive media recognition, event tickets, event table and reciprocal promotion. Following a discussion concerning protocols and criteria for SMADC Sponsorships and Scholarships, Vice Chair Lucille Walker called for a motion to approve the request for sponsorship at the requested amount. **Dan Donohue recused himself from the motion/vote as a Foundation Board Member. Brian Russell made a motion to approve the Sponsorship request at \$2,000. Delegate Gary Simmons seconded the motion. Kayla Griffith requested to amend the motion to approve the Sponsorship at \$1,000. Members concurred. Delegate Gary Simmons made a motion to approve the ‘amended motion’ to sponsor the Alice Ferguson Foundation ‘Pinot on the Potomac’ event at \$1,000.00; Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.**

MMM Program Update – MMM is a statewide program, and as such can only be supported through a statewide organization. MARBIDCO has fulfilled this role as a short-term assist since the program was acquired by SMADC. The MARBIDCO Board decided to relinquish the program as MMM does not fit their long-term goals and mission. The program has been given to MDA, which is now the statewide sponsor. Additionally, a new private non-profit has been established ‘FARMED’ to help raise money for MMM and other food access programs. The non-profit can raise funds and donate to worthy organizations to support their efforts. SMADC and MDA have been invited to FARMED board meetings.

MDA Nutrient Management Changes Listening Session - The Maryland Department of Agriculture, in partnership with SMADC hosted a listening session on June 30th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at the Charles County Soil Conservation District Office, for the SOMD regional agricultural community to discuss the recent MDA Nutrient Management Plan changes that will focus on a new approach to education, training, and farmer empowerment. The listening session was led by Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks and offered an opportunity for the SOMD agricultural community to ask questions and voice any concerns directly with the Secretary and his team. Rachel Jones, MDA announced there will be a Nutrient Management Summit on July 17 at Anne Arundel Community College and encouraged attendance to hear the latest outcomes from the listening sessions from around the state. Hans Schmidt, MDA Office of Resource Conservation explained outcomes that will be presented at the Summit to streamline the plan writing process and assured continued support, training, and cost share assistance.

Staff Program Reports

Buy Local Program Update – Challenge, Event, and Buy Local Guide:

Buy Local Challenge Celebration in person event – will be hosted by Suttler Post Clydesdales in St. Mary’s County on Monday, July 31 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Ticket sales were launched on June 6th promoted across SMADC social media and through partners and participants. Vendor spaces are at capacity; 37 farms/producers are confirmed, and 5 sponsor organizations with booths include MDA, RMC, MARIBIDCO, St. Mary’s Co. Economic Development and Calvert Co. Economic Development.

BLC Statewide - BLC website is updated for the 2023 Buy Local Challenge Week promotion details and resources. A press release and social media promotion is forthcoming announcing Buy Local Week July 21st – 31st. The statewide BLC promotion will include these highlights:

- BLC competitions – ‘take the pledge’, ‘show us your BLC swag’- winners receive BLC bag and promo materials.
- 1,500 BLC totes distributed to 31 SOMD markets region wide (50 totes per market) for promotion during BLC week.
- 12,000 BLC promo cards distributed statewide through ag. partner orgs, all SOMD libraries and participating farms/markets/producers.
- 2,500 Buy Local Guide Rack cards distributed to SOMD region markets and ‘Celebration Event’ ticket holders.
- Social media and digital ads promote BLC statewide.

2023 Southern Maryland Buy Local Guide

6,000 Rack cards have been distributed region wide at SOMD public libraries and participating markets, farms. Online paid Ads/banners and full advertorial promoting the Buy Local Guide are running now on The Baynet for one month. The news website has an online audience of 450,000 viewers per month within the SOMD region: <https://thebaynet.com/smadc-promotes-local-farmers-with-spring-summer-2023-buy-local-guide/>

Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) - All regulatory agencies have submitted their final approvals to the building plans except for the Maryland Department of Environment. However, we feel we have a solution to their issue and expect to have their final approval shortly. Still on track for construction contract by August with a groundbreaking near the end of the year.

Lothian Grain Elevator - There was one submission for the operation of the elevator, and the County is negotiating a lease with them as we speak. Along with AA County as a partner, we submitted a Letter of Interest to the Rural Maryland Council for a Rural Cooperative Grant to do planning a design for a grain mill at the site. The LOI was approved, and we are planning on submitting an application for \$200,000.

Lexicon Documentary Film

An international agricultural film/photography group has chosen SMADC and our work/partnerships in the ag community as their focus for their latest documentary. The Lexicon is a US-based NGO that uses evidence-based storytelling, strategy, and mobilization to build movements that help people pay closer attention to how they eat, what they buy, and where their responsibility begins for creating a healthier, safer food system. They spent 2 days with us (June 26 & 27) shooting at 9 different sites in 4 counties to tell our story.

Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center Workshop - A free workshop on Cash Analysis and Positioning for Farmers and Value-Added Producers - covered hands-on market research, cash flow analysis, and loan preparation - also included a free dinner was hosted at the SMADC office on Wed June 28th, 7 farmers participated.

Maryland Market Money (MMM) and Food Access Updates

- **The NEW Maryland Guide to Accepting Benefits** - published by SMADC for Maryland Market Money. This guide is designed to help Maryland farmers markets and direct-marketing farmers operating independent farm stands accept federal nutrition assistance benefits as

payments for their products. The specific federal nutrition programs referenced in this guide include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Electronic Benefits Transfer (SNAP/EBT); Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for fruits and vegetables, Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for Seniors and WIC participants. This guide also addresses acceptance of credit/debit at the market, and the future of electronic incentives (e-incentives).

- **DHS Statewide Rack Card Mailing** - The annual Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) statewide SNAP redetermination letter and new Maryland Benefits Review letter flyers were printed and delivered to DHS for summer mailing release. See below for statewide/County numbers. Over 23,000 SNAP Redetermination Letters will be distributed to Southern Maryland households receiving SNAP through September. So far, SMADC has had a very large response to the collaborative mailing(s), but it seems that the recipients are desperate to contact someone about their SNAP benefits with many questions about decreased benefit amounts, etc. Our team is giving community members DHS's 800 number as well as some other partner resources and letting them know they can increase their fresh food purchasing power with our program.
- **SOMD Community Fridge:** the first location at Christ Church La Plata is now maintained daily by volunteers. A second location with Christ Church is planned in Newburg (Charles County), and the Charles County Board of Commissioners requested we install one in an appropriate area of Waldorf. The Tri-County environmental health group (Health Departments, Hospitals, etc.) let us know a St. Mary's benefactor (The LDS Church) wants to put significant money towards fridges in their county, starting with Charlotte Hall. Additional funding will be sought to cover the gap the church is not covering. Per Lifestyles - they have added bus routes to pick up more people due to demand to go to fridge in La Plata.

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment

Dan Donohue made a motion to adjourn. Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.

Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month):

August – No meeting

Thursday, September 7, 2023