



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Thursday, October 5, 2023
Minutes - Approved

SMADC Members: Joan Bearden, Shelley Garrett, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Elizabeth Robinson, Charles Sasscer III, Delegate Gary Simmons, Tresor Thomas, Deana Tice, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Mary Wood

Members Absent: Senator Jack Bailey, Steve Connelly, Delegate Brian Crosby, Jennifer David, Dan Donohue, Senator Michael Jackson, Dan Rider, Brian Russell, Russell Shlagel, Lucille Walker

Staff: Cristina Berthelot, Sophie Brauns, John Hartline, Kelley Koeppen, Susan McQuilkin, Rachel Norris, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann, Shelby Watson-Hampton

Guests: Landon Frye – Ambrook, Sierra Criste and Stacy Kubofcik – MARBIDCO

Minutes

SMADC Chair Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes from September 7, 2023. Edward Goodman moved to approve the minutes. Delegate Gary Simmons seconded the motion. All approved.

Guest Speaker – Landon Frye of Ambrook – presented on their financial software product, suited to all types of farms/agricultural enterprises, that helps producers spend less time bookkeeping (budgeting, banking, bill pay, document storage) and also assists with conducting enterprise analysis, maintaining records for certifications, tax preparation, plus an integrated payment platform for retail and online sales.

Director's Report

RFP update – Director Watson-Hampton reported three recently launched RFPs – Blue Catfish Feasibility Study, So.MD Agricultural & Aquaculture Analysis Study and Southern Maryland Meats Website Development received quality proposals. Contracts are being finalized; more details will be forthcoming.

Working Groups Formation – thanks were extended to voting and non-voting members who volunteered for 2 working groups. Meeting schedule invites are forthcoming for:

- Buy Local Challenge – Linda Jones, Tresor Thomas
- SMADC Mini Grants – Charles Sasscer, Joan Bearden, Russell Shlagel, Steve Wall

Community Events and Opportunities –of interest to the agricultural community the following events/opportunities were noted and are posted on SMADC's social media.

- **So.MD Forestry Tour, Oct. 23** – hosted by SMADC with the MD Forestry Association, includes stops at several different industry locations – managed farm and forest, lumber mill, and other industry facilities. The tour is free and includes lunch and transportation.
- **Chesapeake AG. Innovation Center ‘Producers Startup Program’, Dec. 6** – free 6-week course for farmers, value-added entrepreneurs, and others in the early stages of business development. Curriculum includes target markets, price strategies, funding and connecting with customers.
- **MDA Food Tax Credit Program** – enhanced credits now available for farmers who donate food to food banks capped at \$5,000 per year per farm. Exceptions may be made by the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, allowing the tax credit to be increased from \$5,000 per farm to \$10,000 per farm.
- **MARBIDCO Oyster Shucking House Loan Fund** – helps finance the cost of eligible seafood processing projects, including historic oyster shucking houses. Loan amounts range from a minimum of \$25,000, up to a maximum of \$250,000.
- **MARBIDCO Producer Cold Storage Grant** – helps farmers and commercial fishing industries purchase and install needed cold storage. MARBIDCO will match up to 50% of project cost with maximum award of \$1,000.
- **MDA Deer Damage Survey** – to inform and help secure additional funding for deer mitigation.
- **MDA FMNP Program Survey** – seeking input from farmers and farmers markets to enhance program outreach.
- **[SMADC Winter Roundtable Discussion Survey](#)** – recently launched to identify topics, ideas, areas of interest for discussion.

FY’24 Budget Review – Director Watson-Hampton with Rachel Norris-Acheterberg, Fiscal Grants Coordinator, presented and reviewed the FY’24 budget, as approved by TCCSMD Executive Board. Director Hartline noted the budget is first submitted to both the TCCSMD Audit Committee and Executive Board and then goes before the Full Council for final approval. The budget includes \$900,000 in Cigarette Restitution Funds (CRF) and additional grant revenue (Federal, Capital, Bonds) and donations awarded to SMADC for a total of 4.73 million dollars. Using the CRF (base) funding staff has leveraged 3.4 million dollars for the region.

Staff Program Reports

Maryland Market Money (MMM) and Food Access – During the Summer and early Fall, SMADC partnered with two WIC clinics in So.MD to execute two series of pop-up farmers markets featuring MMM program matching hosted by Greater Baden WIC in Prince George's County and So.MD. WIC in Charles County. Both series, now in their third and first years of participation, respectively, were successful; SMADC will continue these partnerships in the future. Greater Baden WIC - 9 locations/dates, 4218 benefits recipients shopped and spent \$22,007 in benefits and were provided \$22,007 in MMM matching dollars for a total economic impact of \$44,014. So.MD WIC - 5 locations/dates, 277 benefits recipients shopped and spent \$1527 in benefits and were provided \$1527 in MMM matching dollars for a total economic impact of \$3,054.

‘SoMD Community Fridges’ - SMADC is now accepting applications from Charles County farmers and food producers to sell their agricultural food products to the So.MD Community Refrigerator Pilot Program (also known as ‘SoMD Community Fridges’).

A community fridge is a zero-barrier (no documentation required) free food source maintained and used by the community it serves. Fridges offer mutual support to reduce hunger and combat food waste while

building a stronger and more resilient community. Farmers and producers sell their products to the fridge program and are compensated via program funds; products are then placed in the Community Fridge and attached pantry for free access to anyone in need. Charles County farmers and value-added agricultural food producers are invited to apply now to participate in SoMD Community Fridges.

Marketing Team

2023 Holiday Farm Guide - solicitations for updates and new listings for the launched September; several social media announcements followed with reminders. Listings will be accepted through the second week of October.

FY'24 End of Year Report – is in development and should be finalized and ready to submit to MDA and Commerce Dept. in mid-October.

Infrastructure Team

RAC Update – Progress is on hold due to septic system issues identified by MDE. We are working assiduously with the help of Senator Bailey and other legislators to resolve the issue without further delays and expense; this is only remaining obstacle to building the RAC.

Southern Maryland Meats Website – the new website is in development; of interest the addition of 'FoodIcons' (international symbols that identify farming practices and other descriptors) are being added to enhance searchable fields for locally raised meats.

Lothian Grain Elevator - Subject of breaking news a press release from Anne Arundel County has identified the operator for Lothian Grain Elevator. County Executive Steuart Pittman announced the County has entered into a Letter of Intent with Warfield to open the grain elevator this fall's harvest on a date to be determined. Warfield will conduct necessary repairs with County permission, beginning today. the County will assist with securing the required Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) air permit and will continue to work with the new operator with the goal of accepting grain through the facility in the coming weeks.

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment

Mary Wood called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Joean Bearden made a motion to adjourn. Deana Tice Seconded the motion. All approved.

Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month):
Thursday, November 2, 2023 (virtual only)