



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Thursday, November 2, 2023
Minutes – Approved

- SMADC Members:** Joan Bearden, Steve Connelly, Jennifer David, Dan Donohue, Shelley Garrett, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Brian Russell, Elizabeth Robinson, Charles Sasscer III, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons, Tresor Thomas, Deana Tice, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Lucille Walker, Mary Wood
- Members Absent:** Senator Jack Bailey, Delegate Brian Crosby, Willie Goddard, Senator Michael Jackson, Dan Rider
- Staff:** Sophie Brauns, Kelley Koeppen, Susan McQuilkin, Rachel Norris, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann, Shelby Watson-Hampton
- Guests:** Ashley N. Sharp – CEO Resurgence Consulting, Mario Minor – CEO Market Fresh Gourmet, Summer Roen, Vincent White, Sierra Criste – MARBIDCO

Minutes

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

Guest Speakers – Ashley N. Sharp – CEO Resurgence Consulting LLC, Mario Minor – CEO Market Fresh Gourmet, Summer Roen, and Vincent White – CEO/Founder CETS Technology – presented on collaborations with the public sector, conscious integrated communications, and intentional community engagement for infrastructure development to help nations and communities including agricultural enterprise in Maryland, Virginia, and the Metro DC area transition to net-zero carbon emissions protocols by 2030/50. The organization is seeking to construct an agri-business center to address supply chain and distribution issues.

Sponsorship Request – Director Watson Hampton reviewed a sponsorship request for **The National Urban Farm Festival** at the \$1,500 level. The free event will take place in April 2024, featuring various aspects of ‘urban’ farming (hydroponics, aquaponics, vermicomposting, raised beds, vertical farming) bringing together urban farmers across the country with educators, researchers, community members and industry professionals (USDA, NRCS, UMD and others). Following an overview by Elizabeth Robinson (event organizer) a discussion ensued regarding the sponsorship level which is over the Commission’s usual limit of \$1,000, with many members recommending full funding at \$1,500. **Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the sponsorship. Joan Bearden made a motion to approve the sponsorship; Dan Donohue seconded the motion.** Further discussion ensued to determine the funding

level. Mary Wood requested Commission members vote their preference for the full amount requested of \$1,500, or \$1,000 level. **Elizabeth Robinson recused herself from the vote due to conflict of interest. Following a ‘rollcall’ of voting members the motion carried at the \$1,500 level (4 votes recorded at \$1,000, and 6 votes at \$1,500).**

Director’s Report

FY’23 End of Year Report – Director Watson-Hampton presented SMADC’s Fiscal Year End Report for the period July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. The FY’23 Annual Report was completed and submitted to the Tri-County Council Executive Board and Maryland Department of Agriculture on October 24. The report is created and presented with ‘Flipping Book’, a software service for streaming PDFs online. Available now to view on the SMADC website (under ‘Reports’ on the ‘About SMADC Page’), the report totals 36 pages summarizing selected highlights from SMADC’s impressive Fiscal Year goals, achievements, and measurements for results (MFR’s). A small quantity of printed reports is in development.

Forestry Tour Recap - on October 23, SMADC/TCCSMD in partnership with with the Maryland Forests Association, Maryland/Delaware Society of American Forests, Maryland Forest Service, and the Maryland Department of Commerce gave a tour of Southern Maryland’s Forestry Industry developed to showcase So.MD’s dynamic and diverse forestry industry. Presenters highlighted the industry’s importance to the regional economy and natural resources and explored issues affecting industry profitability and vitality. The tour started with video presentations from the Maryland Forest Association and SMADC ‘Farms in Focus – Forestry Edition’. Tour stops featured Skyview Farm, a managed forest of comprising over 100 acres, the James A. Forrest Career and Tech Center Environmental Resources Program Curriculum and a tour of family owned and operated Sutphin Lumber sawmill all in St. Mary’s County. At the close of the tour, participants received gifts of local wooden hand-crafted items made by woodworking business “Little House on the Island” of Cobb Island, Charles County. 28 people attended.

Upcoming Ag. Events/Conferences – information was shared of interest for the regional agriculture community:

- [University of Maryland Small Farms Conference](#) – November 2 – 4, 2023
- [Rural Maryland Council Summit](#) – November 13, 2023
- [Maryland Farm Bureau Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates](#) – December 2 – 5, 2023
- [UMES Maryland Agritourism Conference](#) – December 10 – 12, 2023
- [Future Harvest Conference](#) – January 18 – 20, 2024
- [American Farm Bureau Convention](#) – January 19 – 24, 2024
- [Pasa Sustainable Agriculture Conference](#) – February 8 – 10, 2024

Staff Program Reports

Maryland Market Money (MMM) and Food Access – MMM Winter Markets

The end of the farmers market main season is wrapping up with most markets ending in October, November, and December, but year-round and holiday markets are happening now more than ever. Last winter we had only 9 MMM-participating access points open at some point or throughout the winter months, but that list has now doubled to 18 access points. That list will be featured in SMADC’s forthcoming Holiday Guide as well as posted on social media and the MMM website in days to come.

FMNP Program – The MDA and MDH’s Farmers Market Nutrition Program is winding down for 2023 with FMNP checks valid through the end of November. We are encouraging anyone who can help

farmers connect with shoppers who use FMNP benefits, to do so. FMNP redemption in some counties is low this year; if you're able to do so, encourage shoppers and farmers to connect and spend these checks. When checks remain unspent and funding unused, it affects funding levels for future years.

SoMD Community Fridges seeking farmer partners – SMADC's 'SoMD Community Fridge' project is still accepting applications for farmers in Charles County who want to sell their agricultural products into the program. The program is hoping to expand; however, funding must be sought to facilitate the growth of the program to additional counties. More info can be found here:

<https://smadc.com/somdcommunityfridges/>

Marketing Team – 2023 Southern Maryland Holiday Farm Guide – in development with anticipated launch/publication during the week of November 13. Support promotion includes a 'paid' Advertisement with The BayNet and 4,500 printed rack card distributed region wide through participating farms, regional libraries, welcome centers, and other public venues by request.

Infrastructure Team

RAC Update – Progress is again on the move with the building site plans; thanks to the efforts of Senator Jack Bailey, MDE determined the RAC will not need a BAT (Best Available Technology) septic system and that the grease trap and 2 tanks as originally submitted with plans over 5 months ago will be adequate. Budget for the RAC stands at 5.5 million dollars and is funded to that extent. It is hoped grading will start within the next 3 to 4 weeks with groundbreaking in the spring of 2024. Chairwoman Mary Wood and Vice Chair Lucille Walker on behalf on the Commission and agricultural community expressed their gratitude for Craig Sewell's efforts to guide the RAC project to conclusion.

Lothian – Anne Arundel County contracted with an operator for a 3-year lease for the site which has been in operation for the past month. SMADC is continuing discussions with the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation for further economic development on the site. Craig Sewell attended the Common Grain Alliance meeting in DC to research ideas and new market opportunities suitable as additional income areas for the property.

Southern Maryland Meats Website – outreach to all current members to update their website profiles is complete. The new SMM website is due to be launched by the end of this year and is a steppingstone to the larger RAC website to be developed in 2024.

Grandma's Hands - editing and narration are continuing with anticipated release in January 2024.

Blue Catfish and GAP Analysis RFP's have been awarded and meetings have been held to kick off the projects.

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment

Mary Wood called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Delegate Gary Simmons made a motion to adjourn. Dan Donohue seconded the motion. All approved.

Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month):
Thursday, December 7, 2023