



**Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission**  
**Thursday, December 7, 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, Brian Russell, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons

**Staff:** Cristina Berthelot, Sophie Brauns, Susan McQuilkin, Rachel Norris, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann, Shelby Watson-Hampton

**Guests:** Dan Miller, CEO Steward, Sierra Criste, MARBIDCO, Summer Owens, Calvert Planning & Zoning, Rachel Jones, MDA Director of Government Relations, Brandon Rosario – Destination Southern Maryland.

### Minutes

**SMADC Chair Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes from November 2, 2023. Dan Donohue moved to approve the minutes. Deana Tice seconded the motion. All approved.**

**Guest Speaker** – Dan Miller, Founder & CEO, Steward – Funding the Growth of Regenerative Agriculture is a mission-driven lender partnering with regenerative farms and agriculture businesses that seeks to transform local food systems through online crowd funding raising capital for loans and/or to lend support and advocacy. Steward’s lending platform simplifies funding of unique agricultural projects or a collection of regenerative businesses by participating in secured, interest-bearing loans.

### Director’s Report

#### **Commission Membership**

- **Farmer Representatives** – press release and social media announced 5 new membership positions: the addition of a second farmer voting member for a total of 2 representatives for each So.MD county. Interested individuals can apply through the online application form. A letter of recommendation is required. Applicants will be reviewed during the February 2024 Commission meeting with new members announced and welcomed at the March 2024 meeting.
- **Farm Bureau Representative** – the Southern Maryland FB Caucus has identified two So.MD District Directors, Jamie Tiralla and Karl Shlagel as their Commission representatives attending meetings alternately, starting in the new year.

- **Tri-County Council Representative** – is invited to represent the Council at Commission meetings in company with TCCSMD Ex. Director John Hartline. Commissioner ‘BJ’ Bowling may fill the position, pending confirmation.

**Maryland Farm Bureau Convention Update** – SMADC sponsored the Young Farmer Day (\$250) which had record attendance. Photos and videos are available on social media. New MDFB Ag. Ambassador Program representatives were announced – Sarah Beale, St. Mary’s County and Hunter Johnson, Cecil County who over the next year will represent MDFB across the state. Also announced, new President - Jamie Raley (St. Mary’s County), Jonathan Quinn 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Kent County), and Jo-Ann Chason 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Baltimore County).

**2024 Workshops** – Director Watson-Hampton is developing educational workshops for farmers; one workshop per quarter anticipated, mid-week, evenings with dinner. Topics are invited for consideration.

**So.MD Ag. Community Roundtable Discussion Group** – in development for Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter sessions, open to the agricultural community farmers and leaders for networking and discussion on relevant topics. A survey has been sent to regional ag. stakeholders to solicit input for the meeting. SMADC Commission members are highly encouraged to attend.

**SMADC/Farm Bureau Retreat** – the full-day retreat (supported by an RMC/RMPIF grant) will offer Commission members and staff an opportunity for dialogue with representatives of the 5 So.MD farm bureaus. Plans are in development and details will be forthcoming in the new year.

**LEAD Maryland Fellows Class XIII (2024-2025)** – includes 9 individuals from So.MD: 5 from Anne Arundel County, including SMADC Staff – Cristina Berthelot, 1 from Charles County, 2 from Prince George’s County, and 1 from St. Mary’s County – Charles Sasscer, III, SMADC Commission member. 48 applications were received in total with only 23 class seats available to be filled.

### **Staff Program Reports**

#### **Infrastructure Update:**

**RAC** – planning a groundbreaking ceremony for Jan/Feb 2024. More information coming soon.

**Lothian** – the elevator is receiving grain, making payments, and Anne Arundel County is working towards getting a longer-term lease in place.

**Grandma’s Hands** – editing and narration is continuing with possible January release.

**Blue Catfish and GAP Analysis RFP’s** – have been awarded and meetings followed to kick off the projects.

#### **Marketing Update:**

**2023 Southern Maryland Holiday Farm Guide** – launched November 13, available online in ‘FlipBook’ format connects consumers with So. MD farms and producers, restaurants, stores, and winter markets offering So. MD farm products, events, tours, and tastings during the holidays. 119 farms and regional businesses and 25 winter markets promoted. 4,500 promotional rack cards distributed through So. MD Libraries, regional Welcome Centers, and Ag. partners. Paid digital Ads/banners with BayNet.com reached an audience of 450,000. Press release reached over 2,000 SMADC subscribers. Flipbook performance registered 1710 views.

**2024 Cottage Food Workshop – ‘Basics & Next Steps’** – in development with Maryland Department of Health. The free workshop (offered statewide) is scheduled to be presented virtually on February 22, 2024, and will build on the information covered in the January 2023 workshop. In addition to a review of Cottage Food basics, topics will cover next steps for a growing Cottage Food business, how to use the Cottage Food Decision tools and how to access available resources for food businesses. A ‘Save the Date’ announcement will launch in early December; registration will open first week of January 2024.

**2024 Acidified Foods Better Process Control School Class Workshop** – in development with partner and class instructor Dr. Martin Y. Lo presented simultaneously virtually and in person. Anticipated workshop date week of March 11; MDA has agreed to co-host the hybrid workshop in Annapolis. Topics cover the basics of food safety and regulations for acidified foods and satisfies FDA and MDH certification requirements for the commercial production of acidified foods (pickles).

**Maryland Market Money (MMM) & Food Access** – November wrapped up most farmers markets and farm stands while others operate year-round or on a reduced schedule. Data is still incoming; access points thus far have reported over \$422k in MMM incentives distributed to consumers in 2023, ultimately benefitting farmers and local food producers, an all-time program record with one access point successfully fully transitioned to e-incentives as part of our ongoing pilot. Another positive data point is that consumers have spent 98% of the incentives they received with those farmers and food producers; that is indicative of the food insecurity in our communities where we see consumers needing every dollar, but the silver lining is that farmers are seeing more revenue and products sold.

**Giving Tuesday** – SMADC had successful Giving Tuesday communications in support of MMM this year. As the year closes, fundraising efforts will continue; amplifying and sharing our efforts as well as donations are appreciated.

**SoMD Community Fridges** – work in Charles County has picked up steam with a solid rotation of fresh, local farm products being purchased and infused weekly into the existing fridge in LaPlata. Discussions are in process with food access partners in St. Mary's County to replicate the program in the near future.

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

#### **Adjournment**

**Mary Wood called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Joan Bearden made a motion to adjourn. Dan Donohue seconded the motion. All approved.**

**Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month):**  
**Thursday, January 4, 2024**