



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Thursday, January 4, 2024
Minutes – Approved

- SMADC Members:** Joan Bearden, Commissioner Gilbert ‘BJ’ Bowling, Steve Connelly, Dan Donohue, Shelley Garrett, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Elizabeth Robinson, Brian Russell, Charles Sasscer III, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons, Jamie Tiralla, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Lucille Walker, Mary Wood.
- Members Absent:** Senator Jack Bailey, Delegate Brian Crosby, Jennifer David, Willie Goddard, Senator Michael Jackson, Priscilla Leitch, Deana Tice, Tresor Thomas.
- Staff:** Cristina Berthelot, Susan McQuilkin, Heather Hulseley, Kelley Koeppen, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann, Shelby Watson-Hampton
- Guests:** Lisa Ledman – Coordinator, Division St. Mary’s Co. Agriculture & Seafood, Brandon Rosario – Destination So.MD/National Heritage Area, Harrison Palmer – Maryland Dept. of Agriculture, Christina Ledman – Office of Commissioner Bowling.

Minutes

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

Director’s Report

New SMADC Commission Seats: 5 additional farmer representative seats are still open (one representative for each So.MD county). Only one application has been received, which is not eligible for consideration as the applicant is not a farmer. Commission members are encouraged to reach out to their stakeholder communities to encourage applicants.

2024 Outlook Summary: Director Watson-Hampton thanked the Commission for their participation in 2023 and is looking forward to working on SMADC initiatives in 2024. A full slate of agriculture/producer workshops and stakeholder networking opportunities are planned. Conference season continues, one of the largest being Future Harvest, which SMADC is sponsoring. Other upcoming initiatives include the launch of the new Southern Maryland Meats website, and a refresh of the Mentor Match/Farmlink program with a focus on urban agriculture through a grant with UME.

The Legislative session season kicks off on January 10. Director Watson-Hampton will be in Annapolis meeting with legislators and participating with RMC and others in Ag. Day/Maryland Farm Bureau Day and expressed gratitude for the support of SMADC Commission legislative representatives, Senator Jack Bailey, Senator Michael Jackson, Delegate Gary Simmons, Delegate Brian Crosby. SMADC will be working with legislators on a funding Bill to re-up, hopefully permanently, our funding stream through the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF).

Suggestions for speakers and topics are invited for SMADC Commission meetings March through December 2024.

Staff Program Reports

Infrastructure Update

RAC – St. Mary’s County declined to have an early groundbreaking ceremony. Bids for construction will go out in April.

Lothian Grain Elevator – Anne Arundel County is seeking a vendor to operate and maintain the Lothian Grain Elevator through a long-term lease with tentative start May 1, 2024. The following is a list of key dates for this Solicitation:

- Solicitation Issued December 18, 2023
- Site Visits January 8, 2024 at 10:00 AM
- Pre-Solicitation Conference January 8, 2024 at 10:00 AM
- Requests for Clarification by January 12, 2024 by 1:00 PM
- Letters of Interest by January 30, 2024, at 1:00 PM
- Responding Entities Notified of Award by Tentatively February 15, 2024
- Lease/Contract Start Date Tentatively May 01, 2024

Visit the Anne Arundel County Purchasing Division website and search "LOI24000186" OR "Lothian Grain Elevator" to view the solicitation and submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) by Wednesday, January 30 at 1:00 PM: <https://www.aacounty.org/central-services/purchasing/doing-business-county/bid-opportunities?fbclid=IwAR0xNPK8y2DMdX-Bze06YZvjU-FV-vBbCXSpEr4K26gXmhRpj62iBIBHm8>

Grandma’s Hands – Editing and narration is continuing; a Spring release is anticipated.

Blue Catfish and GAP Analysis RFP’s – meetings have been held to kick off the projects. The next meeting is scheduled for Jan 26th.

Marketing Update

MDH Cottage Foods Business Workshop: Basics, Next Steps & Beyond – in development with Maryland Department of Health. The workshop will be offered virtually statewide on February 22, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. A ‘Save the Date’ announcement launched Dec.11 on SMADC social media. Registration will open 1st/2nd week of January. Topics build on the information covered during last year’s workshop: basics of Cottage Food laws, types of allowable foods, package labeling, sales locations, when a food license is required and how to access available resources for food businesses.

2024 Acidified Foods Better Process Control School Class Training Workshop – in development with class instructor Dr. Martin Y. Lo, in partnership with Maryland Department of Agriculture. The class will be presented online statewide and in person at MDA on March 11, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Training will cover the basics of food safety and regulation for acidified foods (pickles) required by MDH/FDA for all processors who engage in the commercial production of Acidified Foods.

Cottage Foods & Acidified Foods Training & Testing Reimbursement Scholarships – in conjunction with the above training workshops, SMADC will offer reimbursements for Acidified Foods Training for half the cost of tuition (\$80) to eligible So.MD farmers/producers who successfully complete the class. Food Testing reimbursement scholarships will be offered for cottage and value-added processed foods (pickles, dehydrated, ferments, etc.) to reimburse certified lab tests and process reviews (up to \$250) for up to 10 farmers/producers, first come first served as funds are available.

Maryland Market Money (MMM) & Food Access

MMM applications for the 2024 market season for anyone (farmers market, farm stands, etc.) who did not participate in 2023 are open: <https://www.marylandmarketmoney.org/mmm-application>. Returning access points will be emailed a separate form for updated info from our team. Applications are accepted all year, but now is the big push for applications.

In December, the MMM Team has been buttoning up the 2023 farmers market season with all access points making sure program data is received and correct, incentive funding distributions are current, and any contractual scope of work activities are happening. A comprehensive needs assessment survey went out to all program access points as part of our GusNIP project to see how we can better meet the needs of farmers markets and direct marketing farmers.

The Community Refrigerator in La Plata is working wonderfully. Local food is purchased each week from all the farmers who have applied to be vendors. Applications are still being accepted from Charles County farmers. Learn more about the project and access the application here:

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

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment

Mary Wood called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dan Donohue made a motion to adjourn. Bill Hitte seconded the motion. All approved.

Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month):

Thursday, February 01, 2024