



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Thursday, February 1, 2024
Minutes - Approved

SMADC Members: Joan Bearden, Steve Connelly, Dan Donohue, Shelley Garrett, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Priscilla Leitch, Charles Sasscer III, Karl Shlagel, Tresor Thomas., Deana Tice, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Mary Wood.

Members Absent: Senator Jack Bailey, Commissioner Gilbert 'BJ' Bowling, Delegate Brian Crosby, Jennifer David, Willie Goddard, Senator Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Robinson, Brian Russell, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons Lucille Walker,

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

Guests: Sierra Criste – MARBIDCO, Joi Howard – Founder, EnBloom Collective, Lisa Knoll – Director Langton Green CSA, Christina Ledman – Office of Commissioner Bowling.

Minutes

Due to absence of a quorum, a Motion to approve the minutes from January 4, 2024, was tabled for approval at the March 7, 2024 Commission Meeting.

Guest Speakers

Lisa Knoll - director of development for [Langton Green](#). The organization provides support for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (housing, care, transportation, vocational training, employment) and a variety of programming and social activities. The organization runs a 13-acre care farm and CSA in Millersville managed by staff and volunteers.

Joi Howard – founder of [EnBloom](#). An incubating space for holistic wellness services, products, and experiences for socially disadvantaged communities. Programs include Growers Market training for gardeners and emerging farmers; Schools enBloom living garden classrooms where students solve farm to market challenges; Practioner in the Park wellness experiences and Seed+Sow Box market for local Black artisans.

Director's Report

Director Watson-Hampton reported on the status of SB0589. The purpose of the bill sponsored by Senator Bailey, is to secure annual and permanent funding for SMADC through the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) at the 5% promised in the original bill (or a minimum of \$1 million dollars). Currently

Maryland Department of Health receives \$30 million of the CRF for smoking cessation programs; SMADC receives \$900,000. The bill has bipartisan support; cosponsors are Senators Jackson, Benson, Elfreth, Ellis, and Rosapepe. Director Watson-Hampton is seeking 5/6 individuals to testify in person and virtually and is soliciting letters of support from the regional agricultural community. Commission members will be emailed details and talking points.

SMADC has testified in support of HB19/SB207 – Natural Resources – Northern Snakehead – Common Name put in by Senator Bailey and Delegate T. Morgan. The purpose of the bill is to encourage consumer consumption of the snakehead (invasive fish) by giving it a new name that will look more appetizing on local menus. It is hoped that a more enticing name could better advertise and promote the product to chefs, restaurants, and stores.

Staff Program Reports

RAC – St. Mary’s County will be putting out the construction bid in April for an award in mid-summer. Construction is anticipated in the fall and will take upwards of one and a half years. Septic issues are resolved and approved. The county design team has submitted the project to the Building Department and Fire Marshall for approval. The Health Department has requested a few more perk tests outside the drain field in case of future expansion of the project.

Lothian – Letters of Intent are out soliciting a long-term operator contract; Shelley Garrett, AAEDC Agriculture Business Development Director reported the LOI outcome is expected to be announced by February 15.

The Debut of the Grandma’s Hands Documentary – The documentary featuring 6 SOMD families will be released in Annapolis at a theater setting in March. Date and location will be released soon.

“Voices of previous generations resound through our food. Our Grandma’s hands made the meals that touched our senses, kept alive our traditions, and nourished our souls. Wherever they may have lived, and however they went about sourcing our food, if we listen, we can hear the family celebrations, feel the appreciation of plenty, and experience the full flavor of their everyday lives. Our grandma’s created family recipes that live on and are now taught to a new generation continuing their family’s legacy which, in turn, defines a region and even a culture. Food tells a panoply of stories, with each story residing in the hearts and memories of the descendants of these creators. It is food from our ‘Grandma’s Hands’.

This documentary video of *Grandma’s Hands* tells these stories. These are stories that touch deep, human intimacies that take place every day in kitchens. We are privileged to hear just a few. Some of our storytellers are in their wisdom years. Others are quite young. They have radically different life experiences, but they all realize this very simple, but very important tenet: that the kitchen is the heart of the home. They know that families that eat together and share their lives at dinnertime and at celebratory events tell a story of lives that are enriched by the food heritage that they all can share. They know the power of *Grandma’s Hands*.”

Blue Catfish and GAP Studies – A call was held on January 26th with PierWater, TCC/SMADC, and the Tri-County Ag Economic Development representatives to review the project plan and list of stakeholders to be contacted over the course of the study. Blue Catfish preliminary report looks promising with interesting potential related to the pet food industry.

Junior SMM Program – the 2023 Junior Program is wrapping up with 20 essays received to date. \$100 stipends will be awarded to successful completers. Essays will be posted on the SMM website.

MDH Cottage Foods Business Workshop – Basics, Next Steps & Beyond – Registration launched January 11. The free virtual workshop will be held on February 22, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. To date 180 people have registered.

2024 Acidified Foods Better Process Control School Class Training Workshop – “Unlock The Potential of Pickled Products and Grow your Small Business” – registration is now open. The training workshop is designed for farmers, producers, and small food entrepreneurs who want to make and sell pickles and will be held in-person at MDA and by webinar on Monday, March 11, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The training fee of \$180.00 includes class materials. and a boxed lunch for in-person attendees.

Cottage Foods & Acidified Foods Training & Testing Reimbursement Scholarships – in conjunction with the above training workshops, scholarship reimbursements are available to So.MD farmers for BPCS training for half the cost of tuition (\$90). Food Testing scholarships will be offered for cottage and value-added foods laboratory tests and process reviews (up to \$250) for up to 10 So.MD farmers, first come first served as funds are available.

Maryland Market Money (MMM) & Food Access

MMM Applications - SMADC is now accepting applications for MMM ahead of the 2024 market season. Farmers markets, farm stands, and CSAs statewide are encouraged to apply. Applications are accepted year-round, but pre-season is the big push. <https://www.marylandmarketmoney.org/mmm-application>

MD Farmers Market Conference - Save the date for the 2024 Maryland Farmers Market Conference. The annual conference brings together local markets and farmers to share topics that will promote the success of farmers markets across the state. The conference will be held at MDA on Tuesday, March 12, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

MDA FMNP Trainings - MDA announced it will host its first round of statewide trainings for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The program provides fresh, unprepared, locally-grown fruits and vegetables to WIC and Senior participants and expands the awareness, use, and sales of such products at farmers markets. Trainings include Southern Maryland on Wednesday, March 27, 1-3 pm at the Charlotte Hall Library. To view the training dates and to sign up, interested participants may register here: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/628pjrv>.

Discussion following staff program reports: Bille Hitte suggested that in the interests of transparency when staff report on or provide insights about regional infrastructure or resources that are not directly related to SMADC programs it would be advisable to make full disclosure to clarify SMADC's relationship (consulting or otherwise) to the project or managing entity. Director Watson-Hampton concurred and assured SMADC is working with the Attorney General regarding potential upcoming consult opportunities to ensure standards of professional disclosure.

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, March 7, 2024