



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Thursday, April 4, 2024
Approved - Minutes

SMADC Members: Joan Bearden, Steve Connelly, Jennifer David, Sydney Garner, Shelley Garrett, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Priscilla Leitch, Dan Rider, Charles Sasscer III, Karl Shlagel, Russell Shlagel, Delegate Gary Simmons, Tresor Thomas, Deana Tice, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Lucille Walker, Mary Wood.

Members Absent: Senator Jack Bailey, Commissioner 'BJ' Bowling, Delegate Brian Crosby, Dan Donohue, Senator Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Robinson, Brian Russell, Tresor Thomas

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

Guests: Jay Rayley, President Farm Bureau - St. Mary's County, Edna Primrose and Mel Litter, Maryland Apprenticeship Center, Sierra Criste, MARBIDCO, Brandon Rosario, So.MD Heritage Area

Minutes

Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes of March 7, 2024. Vice Chair Lucille Walker made a motion to approve. Delegate Gary Simmons seconded the motion. All approved.

Guest Speakers

Maryland Apprenticeship Center (MAC) Follow-up discussion – business connectors Edna Primrose and Mel Litter gave more details on the youth apprenticeship program employment opportunities for students ages 16 and up. MAC can help with administrative roles for program specifics by supporting the 'food' industry in both rural and urban areas and bring employers to the table to develop a clear workforce apprenticeship pathway specific to Southern Maryland agriculture including forestry and fisheries.

Jay Rayley, President, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau – updated the commission on initiatives to re-instate the CASE program in St. Mary's County Public Schools (10th grade – 12th grade) and requested a Letter of Support. CASE curriculum components include Food & Natural Resources, Ag. Science, and Advanced Ag. Sciences Specialization. Sign up for the program must be robustly promoted to encourage interest and optimize registration; a minimum of 12 students are required to implement the program. A public hearing is scheduled for April 23, at Great Mills High School; Commission members are encouraged to attend however, the meeting is for St. Mary's residents only.

Director's Report

Legislative – SB 0589/ HB 0812 – The bill passed the Senate with unanimous approval but was held up in the House Committee with concerns over the fiscal note. A compromise for an amendment option for the Governor to choose to fund “up to 5% of the CRF every year” was removed, but the “\$1 million in funding every year with no sunset” was agreed upon. On April 2nd the House passed the Bill on the floor through with majority support. The Bill goes back to the Senate on April 3rd, and if passed will go forward to the Governor for signature. Chairwoman Mary Wood complimented Director Watson-Hampton on her perseverance to push the Bill through and thanked Senator Bailey, his staff, and So.MD Legislators for rallying support.

Equine Community concerns – HB 162/SB 452 - the Bill would prohibit Liability Agreements (waivers of negligence) for Recreational Facilities that may significantly impact most lesson, boarding and rental stables in the state, as well as competition venues. Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) and the Maryland Horse Council have alerted statewide equine businesses. Director Watson Hampton reached out to Tyler Hough at MD Farm Bureau and Rachel Jones, MDA Legislative and Government Relations Director for clarification.

SMADC Workshop Series – first in an upcoming series of workshops through June 2024 made possible with grant funding from RMC, ‘Getting Started with or Expanding your Agritourism Offerings’ featuring Hugh McPherson, renowned Agri-tourism industry expert; April 16, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the Prince Frederick Library, a complimentary dinner and networking included.

SMADC Farmer Mini-Grant Program, Round 11 – the updated grant Criteria and Guidelines were presented for discussion; the Grant opens April 8 and closes May 8, with awards announced early June, 2024. \$60,000 in funding is available. Awards are up to \$3,000 per applicant and are a one-to-one dollar match by the farmer. Following review and discussion of updates, Chairwoman Mary Wood called for motions to approve the following:

Willie Goddard made a motion to amend eligible projects for ‘Irrigation’ to: *“Irrigation installation or upgrades in regard to GAP certification standards, Food Safety Modernization Act Standards (FSMA), chlorination systems, water testing expenses, drip irrigation, greenhouse irrigation, dedicated agricultural water supply, and overhead irrigation, as pertains to current existing wells or water sources.”* **Russell Shlagel seconded the motion as stated. All approved.**

Russell Shlagel made a motion to approve the Round 11 Mini-Grant award funding increase from \$2,000 to a maximum award of \$3,000 per applicant. Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.

Russell Shlagel made a motion to approve the Round 11 Mini-Grant Criteria, Guidelines, Eligibility, and Eligible Projects as amended and updated. Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.

Buy Local Challenge Event Draft Proposal Review – recommendations following working group review were presented for a permanent farm host site. Components include SMADC will annually grant \$12,000 (reimbursable) to the site to assist in the financial cost of hosting the event, and SMADC will continue to run the online Annual BLC Week. Commission members affirmed the success of the in-person event over the years but voiced concerns regarding a permanent host and ability to retain artistic

oversight and branding control. **ACTION: the draft proposal tabled for further consideration and discussion.**

Farm Bureau Retreat – forthcoming SMADC Commission and Staff, TCCSMD Ex. Committee Members and Farm Bureau Representatives for the 5 So.MD counties will receive an invitation/poll to identify a mutually agreeable date/time for the 2-part Join Leadership Series focused on fostering collaboration and aligning priorities

Staff Program Reports

Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) – The design contractor incorporated the changes the St Mary's Health Dept wanted for the piping in the drain field. A new cost estimate was released from the same design contractor which showed cost overruns compatible with construction delays. St Mary's Co. is actively looking at ways to mitigate the increases.

Southern Maryland Meats Website – Launched with a brand-new look, new logo, and easier navigation. <https://southernmarylandmeats.com/>

Grandma's Hands Documentary Debut – Held on March 19th, at Calvert House Annapolis over 200 people attended the film debut event. It was an outstanding success. The documentary shows the power of passing on traditions and food heritage through the kitchens of 6 So.MD families. Several independent articles and interviews aired on CBS News, WMAR2, Lancaster Farmer, Capital Gazette, Preservation Maryland, with more to come.

Food Safety & Regulatory – 2024 Acidified Foods Training Workshop – March 1, offered in partnership with MDA in person and virtually; 20 people attended (18 in person, 2 virtual). All achieved completion awards. A post Training Survey received 14 responses; 6 identified as farmers from Prince George's, Charles, and St. Mary's, and 8 food entrepreneurs/producers from Frederick, Chestertown, Talbot, and Caroline counties.

Cottage Food Regulatory Issue – with the assistance of Senator Jack Bailey staff is responding to requests from the Amish community to intercede regarding the mandatory requirement for both an email and phone number to be included on Cottage Foods retail labels for products sold to grocery stores. Dr. Clifford Mitchell, Director, MDH Environmental Health Bureau said a change may be possible.

Food Access Update – MMM Community School Outreach: Community schools develop and utilize partnerships that connect the school, students, families, and surrounding community to county resources, and essential services. Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School became eligible as the first Charles County Public Schools Community School (CCPSCS) for the 2021/22 school year; Indian Head Elementary School joined the program in the 2022/23 school year; three schools were added for the 2023/24 school year: Dr. Gustavus Brown, Eva Turner, and J.P. Ryon Elementary Schools. Due to funds provided by Charles Co. to SMADC/MMM 900 lbs. of local fruits and vegetables, 200 lbs. of meat, and 90 doz. brown eggs are provided weekly to 5 CCPSCS. Additionally, SMADC/MMM will coordinate 250, 10 lb. bags of local produce to be distributed at the Charles Co. Community School Fair in April and partnered with SNAP-Ed for the development of a school garden at Dr. Mudd Elementary.

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment

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

Next SMADC Meeting (first Thursday of the month): Thursday, May 2, 2024.