



**Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission**  
**Thursday, May 2, 2024**  
**Approved - Minutes**

**SMADC Members:** Joan Bearden, Steve Connelly, Dan Donohue, Sydney Garner, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Priscilla Leitch, Elizabeth Robinson, Brian Russell, Charles Sasscer III, Tresor Thomas, Deana Tice, Jamie Tiralla, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Lucille Walker, Mary Wood.

**Members Absent:** Senator Jack Bailey, Delegate Brian Crosby, Commissioner 'BJ' Bowling, Jennifer David, Shelley Garrett, Willie Goddard, Senator Michael Jackson, Delegate Gary Simmons, Dan Rider, Russell Shlagel, Karl Shlagel

**Staff:** Cristina Berthelot, John Hartline, Heather Hulsey, Susan McQuilkin, Kelley Keoppen, Rachel Norris, Craig Sewell, Kelly Swann, Shelby Watson-Hampton

**Guests:** Sierra Criste, MARBIDCO, Roseanna Vogt, Circle of Angels, Kathleen Mettle, Chief of Staff/Delegate Brian Crosby

**Minutes**

**Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes of April 4, 2024. Director Watson-Hampton requested a correction to the date of the draft minutes. Bill Hitte requested an attendance correction. Bill Hitte made a motion to approve the minutes of April 4, 2024, as corrected. Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.**

**Guest Speakers** – Carla Wilson, project manager, St. Mary's Community Development Corporation, presented on the LMPP (Lexington Manor) Community Garden project. A collaborative project with county entities developed as a potential template for other areas in the county for residents to grow their own produce, provide a safe community gathering area and healthy living/diet education, environmental engagement, and physical activity/exercise.

**Director's Report**

**Staff Updates** – the new Administrative & Grants Coordinator, Terri Wright Gresholm, and the new Agricultural Programs Coordinator, Sabrina Dobbins (taking over Susan McQuilkin's position) will be starting with SMADC on May 13. Save-the-Date for Susan's Retirement Party, Thursday June 6, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Barns at New Market in Charlotte Hall, MD. Invite to follow.

**SMADC Workshop Series** – the SMADC agritourism workshop was hosted on April 16 to a full crowd. 50 local farmers/producers joined to hear from an expert in the industry. It was a lively and well received

workshop. Survey results say that it “*exceeded expectations for participants*”. Other workshop series topics in development include social media, urban and suburban small plot farming, and food on the farm.

**Farm Bureau Retreat** – upcoming, a two-part series, funded by an RMC grant, to be held at Prince Frederick Library in Calvert County on May 15 and 16 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., focused on fostering collaboration and aligning priorities to better serve Southern Maryland's agricultural community, exploring best practices, and developing a unified vision for the future. Commission members are encouraged to attend both evenings.

**Buy Local Challenge Event Discussion** – at the last Commission meeting and in a subsequent interim meeting it was decided to continue ownership of the event and host again in July 2024. As the Celebration Event officially termed having completed the 5-county rotation as intended, sufficient funds were not budgeted for FY’24; additional funding sources and other logistics required to launch the project as quickly as possible will be considered at the upcoming TCCSMD Executive Board meeting.

### **Staff Program Reports**

**Regional Agricultural Center (RAC)** – we are waiting for final approval from the Health Dept. and Fire Marshal; no one anticipates problems at this stage, since all their questions have been asked and answered. St. Mary’s County Procurement will send the bid out for construction in late Spring/early Summer. St. Mary’s County DPW and Econ. Development. have been invited to present directly to the TCC Board and the SMADC Commission at their next meetings in May.

**Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond Cohort** – centered on rural investment and revitalization Craig will present his final project, also to be presented to the Commission at the next meeting.

**Catfish and Gap Analysis** – RFP final reports are due in June; both interim reports were presented at the April meeting of the St. Mary’s County Agriculture and Seafood Board.

**Food Access Team** – The Food Access Team is extremely busy with farmers market season prep and on boarding new markets and direct marketing farms. Some farms or markets may not accept benefits as payment, which means that would have to happen first for them to be able to match MMM incentives. Currently, for the 2024 season there are approximately 60 MMM access points statewide with a record 23 in the 5 Southern Maryland counties SMADC serves.

April 12, MMM kicked off our new e-incentives platform development with Twenty Labs, the developers of the Healthy Together app. The team meets weekly to develop the new platform integration with launch anticipated July 1 for the kickoff of the Farmers Market Nutrition Program season.

Community Refrigerator farm purchases are increasing from once per week to twice per week to accommodate the foot traffic the food pantry at Christ Church La Plata. The church is also planting a community garden to stock the fridge in the future to ensure project sustainability.

On April 27, SMADC supported the Community Day for JP Ryan, Dr. Mudd, Eva Turner, and Dr. Brown Elementary Community Schools in Charles County where 400 local produce bags were distributed to school families. A “Community School” is a school that develops and utilizes partnerships that connect the school, students, families, and surrounding community to the resources needed to thrive. A cross promotion with MMM rack cards in every produce bag also reminds families to shop with their local farmers.

An additional expansion of fresh produce delivery from local farms is being planned for the food pantries in Charles County which lack fresh perishable food with their food distribution. MMM is partnering with Lifestyles of Maryland's Charles County Food Connection and Southern MD WIC to identify pantries in need and healthy food priority areas. We hope to have that effort up and running in May.

**Marketing** – **The Southern Maryland 'Buy Local Guide' Farmers Market edition** updated for the 2024 season launched on April 22. The new release offers interactive search options to help consumers find So. MD grown, harvested, and made products offered at 30 Southern Maryland farmers markets around the region and at 10 Metro DC and Virginia markets hosting one or more Southern Maryland farm vendor. Additional sections to be added in the coming months include regional farms in all categories (meats, produce, dairy, etc.), farm stores/stands, CSAs, and other agricultural producers including wineries, breweries, and distilleries offering Southern Maryland grown, harvested and value-added products. Find SMADC's [Southern Maryland 'Buy Local Guide'](#) now on the ['Get our Guides'](#) page at SMADC.com. So.MD farms/producers are encouraged to submit listings via the [online application form](#).

**Food Safety & Regulatory** – staff with the assistance of Senator Jack Bailey is responding to requests from the Amish community to intercede regarding the mandatory requirement for both an email and phone to be printed on Cottage Foods labels for products sold to licensed grocery stores. MDH Office of Food Protection notified SMADC the labelling concerns are being addressed and proposed language for the emergency regulations (and permanent regulations) are in process; going forward Amish community cottage food producers can use SMADC's email/phone for contact. Kim Burns, Chief, center for Facility and Plan Review has reviewed SMADC's request to consider a 2-piece label for product ingredients and confirms this has been finalized and submitted and will be posted to the MDH website once it has been approved.

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

**Adjournment** – Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bill Hitte made a motion to adjourn. Joan Bearden seconded the motion. All approved.

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