



## **Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission**

**February 6, 2025**

### **Approved - Minutes**

**SMADC Members:** Mary Wood, Lucille Walker, Senator Jack Bailey, Joan Bearden, Dan Donohue, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Brian Russell, Elizabeth Robinson, Tresor Thomas, Jamie Tiralla, Commissioner 'BJ' Bowling, Daniel Mast, Steve Connelly, Jennifer David, Shelley Garrett, Caroline Trossbach, Steve Wall, Sydney Garner

**Members Absent:** Delegate Brian Crosby, Senator Michael Jackson, Delegate Gary Simmons, Dan Rider, Russell Shlagel, Deana Tice, Karl Shlagel, Priscilla Leitch,

**Staff:** Shelby Watson-Hampton, Heather Hulsey, Sabrina Dobbins, Rachel Norris, Kelly Swann, Sophia Brauns, Kelley Koeppen, Terri Wright Gresholm

**Guests:** Sierra Criste (Marbidco); Jonathan Cribbs; Brandon Rosario

### **Minutes**

**Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes for January meeting. Dan Donohue made a motion to approve the minutes and Brian Russell seconded.**

### **Director's Report**

#### **FY 26 Budget Update**

Governor's Budget Bill HB350

The SMADC budget took a significant hit with the announcement of the Governor's proposed budget.

Despite the strenuous yet successful task of us working together to pass a bill the Governor signed just last Session to secure SMADC's funding – the new Budget Bill will overturn that legislation.

As such, we have been informed by the Secretary of Budget and Management that the following has been put forth in the Governor's Budget regarding our state funding:

- \$100,000 is taken from the current budget (FY25)- leaving \$900,000 to operate
- \$250,000 will then be taken from our FY26 Budget – leaving \$750,000 to operate
- \$250,000 will then be taken from the \$750,000 in FY27 – leaving \$500,000 to operate
- \$250,000 will then be taken from the \$500,000 in FY28 – leaving \$250,000 to operate,
- \$250,000 will be taken from in FY29 – leaving \$0 in state funding.

The plan is to phase out SMADC over the next 4 years.

It is the opinion of the state budget analysts at the Department of Budget and Management that Southern Maryland agriculture should no longer receive money from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (which will continue to come into the state) and they are planning to phase SMADC out of that funding over these four years.

If SMADC disappears because we have no funding, then all SMADC's grants, sponsorships, scholarships, and programs for the Southern Maryland farming community will disappear too.

Please see links and attachments below:

HB350 - <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Legislation/Details/hb0350?ys=2025RS>

HB350 Doc – see page 64 & 65 - <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb0350f.pdf>



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**Motion :** Shelby will compose a letter to The House of Delegates and Senate requesting all or partial funding to be restored . Commissioner BJ Bowling made a motion and seconded by Joan Bearden.

**SMADC End of Year FY24 Report** <https://online.flippingbook.com/link/799410/>

Shelby presented the 24th annual report, which will be available in digital format and in printed copies. It's a 38 page report highlighting the achievements of SMADC for the year. It shows our mini-grants recipients, and different projects we've worked on last year. A few of them shared pictures and some of the projects. It also has scholarships and sponsorship recipients, our BLC and Maryland Market Money progress of serving 720 farmers at this point.

### **MARBIDCO Draft - Application for the Southern Maryland Livestock**

This is going to work very much like the other two programs we already have a relationship with MarBidco. It would be established using some of the monies that we just mentioned that are coming back. The loan amounts would range from \$25,000 to \$250,000, a request on the applicant, with collateral security required. Southern Maryland by investing in local livestock processing to support livestock producers. As an incentive for borrowers in good standing, SMADC would forgive approximately 20 to 25% of the loan amount due at the end of the loan term. That's the grant portion. So, they'd be paying their loan, and then if they were paid in good and, you know, everything was working, then they would get the money, a kind of forgiveness at the end of the loan as a grant. This is what MarBidco does. SMADC is not a lending institution.

### **Mini Grants Application**

This is one of our most popular programs. We're going to be provide \$3,000 per applicant and it is a dollar-to-dollar match. So it is a matching grant. This is the 12th round of grants that we've done. It's going to offer \$60,000 worth of funding. And rural farms are encouraged to apply. We have decided it would be prudent to do it for \$60,000 right now, save \$30,000 in reserve just in case something happens with everything that's going on. And if we don't have to use that \$30,000 for something else, then we can do another round of mini grants before the end of the fiscal year. And so, we'll just do one \$60,000 round, potentially one \$30,000 round.

**Motion:** Motion to approve round 12 of the mini-grant program authorizes staff to proceed to roll this out, then we can get it on the floor for further discussion. Dan Donahue made a motion and Joan Bearden seconded. Staff are directed to move forward with the mini-grant program.

### **Staff Updates**

#### **RAC**

As a result of the cancellation of the RAC Contract, the following two initiatives have been undertaken:· Repurpose the \$450,000 returned to SMADC from St Mary's County to meat processing: A RFP is being finalized for a Capital and Equipment grant for a cut and wrap and value-added meat processing establishment in Southern Maryland; \$200,000 is being allocated as a grant to get the establishment up and running as soon as possible; \$250,000 is being allocated as a loan/grant through MARBIDCO for further growth of the establishment. 7 year loan at 4%, secured, with final two years forgiven for on time payments for 5 years; The \$50,000 charcuterie box currently in storage is offered as a part of the grant; Additional HACCP training and consulting will be provided at the customer's request.; RFP must be approved by Commerce AG, and TCC Executive Committee. Grant equipment that is in storage for the RAC Commercial kitchen



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Items from commercial grade reach in refrigerators and freezers, double stacked pizza ovens, stainless tables, etc. will be offered via a grant to public and commercial establishments within the 5 county area. Transportation from the storage site to the grantee will be borne by the grantee.

#### **Maryland Market Money (MMM) Program:**

January has been keeping the MMM Team busy. We've been working on renewing MMM's Montgomery County funding contract (held by MDA) which is effective 2/15/2025 and provides increased financial support, as well as doing significant 2025 market season program prep. Last week's federal funding chaos ended up that all of MMM's funders with federal funding, after consulting with their own legal support, directed us to keep working on our projects because their funds were already in hand, so no payment interruptions are anticipated. We gathered directives on file in writing as backup. Maryland Market Money (MMM) is facing a tighter overall incentive budget for the 2025 market season. Effective immediately, MMM is implementing a \$10 per day incentive match cap per shopper. This measure is necessary to slow spending this winter while we assess available funding for the 2025 season. Several jurisdictional funders have yet to confirm their FY2026 contributions, and state funding alone cannot meet the program's statewide needs. MMM remains committed to supporting our access points, farmers, and communities. We will continue exploring every avenue to sustain and grow the program.

#### **SoMD Community Fridges and Food Access:**

The SMADC MMM/Food Access Team extended its agreement with LifeStream Church in Waldorf who are in the process of installing a second Community Refrigerator on their premises. We also released an RFP (which has now closed) for qualifying farmers to provide and distribute food to the SoMD Community Fridge locations and partner community schools with fridges and pantries. We are working with TCC leadership to select a winner. We received four proposals in total from Charles County farmers. The federal funding freeze situation unfortunately delayed us a few days from original timeline for proposal review and selection. Announcements on that will be asap. We also set aside a smaller fund to continue to allow farms with low fulfillment capacity to continue to sell their products into the program. The SoMD Community Fridge Program will continue its contract-funded effort in Charles County through the end of September 2025. At the end of the contract, our community partners hosting those refrigerators will take full responsibility for maintaining and ensuring the fridges stay stocked. You can find more information about SoMD Community Fridges and other SMADC food access efforts here: <https://smadc.com/somdcommunityfridges/>.

We continue to consult with Prince George's Food Equity Council on their community refrigerator project in Prince George's County where they are in the process of awarding support for the local food assistance providers who applied to have fridges installed at their respective locations. There is a farmer food purchase component to their project, too.

#### **Creative Services**

We've dedicated a lot of time to updating our websites and getting the word out about our programs while prepping for some upcoming workshops.



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### **Website Refresh:**

We've made some significant updates to our websites to make them more user-friendly and informative. The goal is to showcase our programs better and ensure that everyone knows what we're up to!

### **Press Releases:**

We published a few important press releases this month, including the much-anticipated End of Year Report:

- 1. February 3, 2025 - We announced the release of our FY'24 Annual Report, highlighting our commitment to Southern Maryland's agricultural community. It's a great way to share what we've accomplished and where we're headed!
- 2. January 30, 2025 - We're hosting a Southern Maryland Equine Seminar that focuses on the health and well-being of both riders and horses. It's a fantastic opportunity for our community to learn best practices in equine care.
- 3. January 24, 2025- We launched a survey aimed at shaping our strategic plan. We want to hear from you—your input is crucial in guiding our future efforts!

Looking Ahead: As we move into February, we'll keep the momentum going by promoting our programs and engaging with the community through workshops and events. The initiatives we kicked off this month will help us serve our agricultural community even better.

### **Urban Ag Consultant:**

Monica Newman has begun working as the Urban Ag Consultant. We have planned weekly meetings for both SMADC and Monica to provide updates on this project. We are in the beginning stages of planning an Urban Ag Meet up on Friday, February 21st from 5pm-7pm for Urban agriculture farmers, homesteaders, and gardeners alike to meet at the SMADC office during this meet up. Dinner will be providing along with an evening of networking and relationship building for urban farmers to make other connections in Southern Maryland.

### **Southern Maryland Equine Seminar:**

A Southern Maryland Equine Seminar has been planned for Thursday, March 20th from 3-7pm at the SMECO auditorium in Hughesville, MD. Partially funded by a grant from the Maryland Horse Industry Board, this seminar is geared toward all equestrians in Southern Maryland – both beginners and seasoned horse lovers. This seminar will connect equestrians with three speakers covering topics including equine nutrition, strength & flexibility for the rider, and trail riding safety. Participants are capped at 45 due to capacity limitations of the auditorium. Dinner will be provided. Participants will be going home with a trail riding safety kit including a fanny pack containing a flashlight, whistle, a small first aid kit, and vet wrap.



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#### **Regulatory:**

SMADC continues to assist with regulatory challenges Amish communities face. A new Amish owned and operated cottage food company that has run into issues with St. Mary's County Health Department. We continue to support and assist in guiding this farmer through health department regulations. SMADC continues to work with Clover Hill Dairy, updating SOPs and forwarding to MDH.

#### **Mini Grants:**

Round 12 mini-grant applications are gearing up to be opened. This round of grants has \$60,000 available funds. These applications will be opened tomorrow Friday, February 7th and close on Friday, February 28th. On Thursday February 13th, we will be hosting a Mini-Grant FAQ webinar from 7-8pm to walk through the grant applications. There will be press releases and social media posts promoting this. Apply at the link below:

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/Smadc/SMADCsSouthernMarylandFarmerMiniGrantRound12>

#### **Buy Local Challenge Celebration:**

There will be a small work group formed to begin planning for the 2025 Buy Local Challenge event. If you are interested, please drop your email in the chat or email me directly at [sdobbins@smadc.com](mailto:sdobbins@smadc.com)

#### **Meeting Times Survey Results**

We conducted a survey of meeting times for SMADC Meeting. We received 26 responses, and the results are as follows: We will continue having our meeting from 9:00am-11:00am on the first Thursday of the month. The other question was, would people support onsite farm tours. The results are 25 people voted yes. We will begin looking at different areas to meet in person.

Please also note this survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDMeatprocessing>

**Maryland Animal Processing Needs Survey hosted by Howard County Ag Preservation Board/The Flower Institute**

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

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

**Next SMADC Meeting: Thursday March 6th, 2024.**