



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

December 4, 2025

Approved Minutes

SMADC Members: Joan Bearden, Dan Donohue, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Tresor Thomas, Karl Shlagel, Steve Connelly, Caroline Trossbach, Sydney Garner

Members Absent: Mary Wood, Lucille Walker, Senator Jack Bailey, Delegate Brian Crosby, Senator Michael Jackson, Delegate Gary Simmons, Willie Goddard, Brian Russell, Elizabeth Robinson, Dan Rider Russell Shlagel, Deana Tice, Jamie Tiralla, Commissioner 'BJ' Bowling, D'Real Graham, Jennifer David, Shelley Garrett

Staff: Shelby Watson-Hampton, Craig Sewell, Rachel Norris, Sabrina Dobbins, Terri Wright Gresholm

Guests: Sierra Criste (Marbidco); Molly Meehan; Megan Zalesak; Steve McHenry; Andrew Bowles

Minutes

NO VOTE FOR MINS

Director's Report

Nominating Committee Update and Board Membership: Shelby and Edward Goodman discussed the status of the nominating committee, confirming that the current spreadsheet of nominees is up to date, and encouraged members to identify candidates for open positions before the January meeting. Edward Goodman confirmed that all necessary contacts had been made regarding renewals and nominations, and the current list is finalized unless new interest arises. Shelby stated that the finalized list would be sent out after the meeting and encouraged members to help identify potential nominees during the holiday season to fill any vacancies by January.

Lead Maryland Class Selection and Announcements: Shelby announced that seven individuals from Southern Maryland, including SMADC staff Kelly Swann and Rachel Norris Achterberg, as well as Sydney Garner, were selected for the next Lead Maryland class, highlighting the region's strong representation.

Shelby presented the nearly finalized draft of the SMADC strategic plan for 2026–2030, reviewed its methodology, goals, and action steps. Shelby described the plan's multi-year goals, associated objectives, and detailed action steps with timelines, including the development of a comprehensive grant acquisition program and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation metrics.

Budget Structure and Sources: Shelby explained the two main budget documents: one detailing funds and another showing the Tri-County Council's comprehensive budget, including administrative and programmatic expenses. Approval will be discussed in January meeting.

Proposed Legislative Change for SMADC Economic Development Initiatives: Craig Sewell presented a proposal for minor legislative to participate more directly in agricultural economic development, including making loans and holding equity. Craig outlined the Southern Maryland Agricultural Capital Access Program (AGCAP), which would allow SMADC to invest in local agricultural businesses, own property, and take equity positions to support regional infrastructure and economic growth.



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Staff Updates

AMPS/SMADC Lunch:

SMADC invited the four (Prince George's does not currently have an AMP) county agriculture marketing professionals to the SMADC Office for an informal discussion with lunch on November 18th. SMADC and the AMPS shared updates about each county and SMADC gave an update on programs that we offer including the mini grant program, the in-office lending library, scholarship and sponsorship opportunities, our guides and more. Each county gave an update about their areas as well.

Equine Extra and Livestock Breeder Guides:

These guide applications have closed and are being organized to be created into an online flipping book that will be accessible on SMADC.com. We will have rack cards available with information on these flipping books available in the new year.

Veteran Farmer Workshop:

We had 18 farmers sign up with 11 in attendance. The evening was filled with robust conversation, resource sharing and networking for these farmers. Our speaker was Peter Scott with the Veteran Farmer's Coalition who shared resources from this organization, including the Homegrown by Heros sub-brand. Peter is working towards creating a Maryland chapter of the Farmer Veteran Coalition and needs 10 people to volunteer for a board position. These members do not have to be veterans to apply to sit on this board. Please let me know if you are interested and I will get you in touch with Peter.

PGFEC:

The Prince George's County Food Equity Council had received a small amount from an unused grant to distribute for cold storage needs to Prince George's County food pantries in need. There was a previous application that the MMM department worked on and due to the short timeline of this grant, previously denied applicants were contacted with the opportunity to reapply. Through this process, three organizations applied and all were able to be, at least, partially funded.

Round 13 Mini Grants:

Round 13 of SMADC's mini grant program is currently open and accepting applications. All resources are available on SMADC.com including criteria and guidelines, budget template, contacts for letter of reference and a recording of the Mini Grant FAQ webinar that was held on November 12th. Applications are due, in full, by December 31st, 2025.

Equipment Grants:

These grant funds support the purchase of farm equipment for the benefit of farmers in the Southern Maryland Region. Proposals will be accepted from regional entities within the five Southern Maryland counties (Anne



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Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's), such as county Soil Conservation Districts, Farm Bureaus, farming organizations, non-profit organizations, etc. This grant will be open on January 5th and close January 30th.

Creative Services:

The 2025 Southern Maryland Holiday Farm Guide has been successfully launched online at SMADC.com to promote local agricultural sales this holiday season. This comprehensive, interactive resource connects consumers with farms across all five counties for everything from Christmas trees and décor to unique artisan gifts and fresh holiday foods. By driving traffic to local producers and encouraging spending, the guide serves as a key initiative to maximize farm profitability and boost the regional economy. Staff is now focused on sustained digital and physical promotion to ensure strong market engagement throughout the winter months. Learn more here: <https://us5.campaign-archive.com/?u=88615614bbcd68eaf83a2cbce&id=235c942e58>

USDA Farm-to-School Grant Application Press Release: 11/28

SMADC is currently fast-tracking a submission for the USDA Patrick Leahy Farm-to-School Grant to fund a 24-month pilot program titled "From Field to Fork." This initiative aims to eliminate procurement and supply chain barriers to increase local food sourcing for school meals, supporting both child nutrition and regional agriculture. We are urgently seeking a Letter of Participation from one of the five Southern Maryland county school systems by December 4, 2025, to serve as the replicable partner for this \$125,000 project. The selected school partner will commit to testing a simplified local sourcing model to ensure the program's success and scalability across the region. - <https://us5.campaign-archive.com/?u=88615614bbcd68eaf83a2cbce&id=cf41e404b6>

Infrastructure Update

Amish: Assisting the Amish with USDA updates and new inspector process.

Stauffer's Butcher Barn: On schedule, waiting for grand opening date.

Member Updates – Members shared news and updates.

Adjournment –Meeting adjournment called by Bill Hitte

Next SMADC Meeting: Thursday January 8th , 2026