



Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

July 9, 2026

Approved Minutes

SMADC Members: Mary Wood, Joan Bearden, Dan Donohue, Willie Goddard, Edward Goodman, Bill Hitte, Linda Jones, Brian Russell, Elizabeth Robinson, Tresor Thomas, Adam Miller, Commissioner 'BJ' Bowling, Steve Connelly, Caroline Trossbach, Sydney Garner

Members Absent: Dan Rider, Russell Shlagel, Karl Shlagel, Senator Jack Bailey, Jennifer David, Shelley Garrett

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

Guests: Molly Meehan, Sierra Criste, Katelyn Bullock, Angelina Perez, Serenity Mitchell, Lee Greely, Cassie Shirk, Ebila Prike

Minutes

Chairwoman Mary Wood called for a motion to approve the minutes for March meeting. Dan Donohue made a motion to approve the minutes, and Bill Hitte seconded. Members unanimously approved .

Director's Report

New Commission Members Intro & Welcome- Shelby explained recent commission turnover, noting that Delegate Bryan Crosby and Delegate Simmons stepped down, Senator Michael Jackson took a new position, and Senator Kevin Harris is now in Senator Jackson's previous position. Shelby shared information about new prospective members Delegate Howard (Anne Arundel) and Delegate Baylor (St. Mary's), their legislative backgrounds, and the process for integrating them into the commission.

Farm Tour Recap- Shelby provided a detailed recap of the May 7th annual farm tour in St. Mary's County, focusing on the beef and value-added industries, including visits to the Amish slaughterhouse, Stauffer Butcher Barn, and Dixon Family Farms, with commission members and guests sharing positive feedback and suggestions for future tours.

Scholarship Approval for LEAD Maryland Fellow- Shelby presented a scholarship request for Tyra Cobb Davis, a LEAD Maryland fellow from Prince George's County, seeking \$2,000 in tuition assistance; Shelby highlighted Tyra's background in urban forestry, outreach, and landscape management, noting her alignment with LEAD Maryland's themes of climate change, water resource management, and advocacy.

After discussion, Dan Donahue moved to approve the request for \$2000 scholarship, Joan Bearden seconded. The group unanimously approved.

Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) Collaborations: Shelby discussed ongoing and new collaborations with MAEF, including the replication of SMADC's educational seminar in northern counties and the development of agricultural apprenticeship programs. SMADC's Southern Maryland educational seminar, which connected teachers and ag industry professionals, was successful and will be replicated by MAEF in northern counties, with SMADC credited for the idea and support provided for budgeting and outreach.



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Staff Updates

Regulatory- Sabrina reported on the Clover Hill Dairy listeria outbreak and recall, SMADC's ongoing support for cottage food producers, and liaison work between Amish/Mennonite communities and regulatory agencies.

Grant Applications and Awards- SMADC applied for five grants, including Northeast SARE, Southern Maryland AG Resiliency, Rural Health Transformation, and USDA NIFA, with two grants awarded: the Maryland Apprenticeship Grant and the Southern Maryland Food Access Program, supported by Charles County ARPA funds.

Producer Assistance and Workshops- SMADC offered grant writing assistance for post-harvest infrastructure and urban agriculture grants, hosted hands-on workshops on cattle handling and value-added production, and provided technical support for farmers applying for funding.

Internship Program and Activities- Three summer interns, funded by Rural Maryland Council, participated in farm tours, events, and networking, each working on individual projects to be presented and published on SMADC's website.

Buy Local Challenge- The Buy Local Challenge Celebration (July 27th) will be hosted by SMADC this year in cooperation with the host Farm - Lyon Family Farm in Mechanicsville, MD. Tickets are on sale. With each ticket sale, attendees will receive an insulated Buy Local Challenge tote, BLC Hat and loads of information and pamphlets. The event offers free carriage rides, pony rides, shopping from local agriculture-based vendors, food trucks, live music and more!

Master Butcher Apprenticeship Program- Craig described the creation of a master butcher apprenticeship program at Stauffer Butcher Barn, funded for the first 1.5 years by MAEF, targeting a graduating high school senior and a veteran, with SMADC as the program sponsor and MAEF as the intermediary. Craig requested, setting aside \$100,000 to fund the remaining years of the apprenticeship program if state funding does not materialize, ensuring continuity and expansion of agricultural apprenticeship opportunities.

After discussion, Dan Donahue moved to set aside \$100,000 to cover funding for the apprenticeship program, Joan Bearden seconded. The group unanimously approved.

SMILE Show- We had a record number of kids this year, 134 and over 300 animals, but everybody had a good time. The organization is reassessing the original purpose of the Smile Show, which was centered on education, entertainment, and stimulating young people's interest in agriculture, particularly livestock.

SMM Junior Livestock Program Applications (May 19): Applications were opened for the 2026 Southern Maryland Meats (SMM) Junior Livestock Program. This initiative engages youths ages 8 to 21 in responsible livestock production. Participants receive promotional materials for fall county fairs and a \$125 stipend upon the successful submission of a reflective essay by January 2027. We have over 40 young people signed up so far.



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Staff Updates (cont.)

Marketing & Outreach- Kelly Swann described SMADC's marketing and outreach efforts, including public health advisories, technical assistance, and the launch of the Buy Local Challenge campaign, with partnerships involving the Maryland Department of Agriculture and local media to promote local food and agricultural products. On May 12th, for National Mental Health Month, we relaunched our initiative dedicated to the well-being of our regional farmers. As we know and understand, farming comes with incredibly unique heavy stressors. This program connects our agricultural producers with specialized resources, advocacy, and supports networks tailored specifically to them. To help build this visibility, we distributed over 700 awareness stickers among our community partners. We have more available.

Buy Local Campaign-Buy Local Challenge campaign is running across social media and e-mails everywhere. It runs July 17th through the 27th. This partnership was highly successful last year in spreading the word statewide.

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. Bill Hitte seconded the motion. All approved.

Next SMADC Meeting: Thursday May 7th, 2026

May 7th – In person farm tour. 9am – 1pm w/ lunch.

July 9th – Virtual 9am – 11am. The second Thurs due to the holiday

September 3rd - Virtual 9am – 11am.

November 5th – Virtual 9am – 11am.