

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ARAC) MINUTES
Virtual Meeting
September 27, 2023, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Attendees In-person (I) and Virtual (V):

ARAC Members:

Steve Darcey, Chair, Soil Conservation District Representative (I)

Pharyn Smith, Co-Chair, Citizen Member (I)

Bill Ritchie, Citizen Member (I)

Jennifer Cross, Farm Bureau Representative (V)

Dan Donohue, Forestry Industry Representative (V)

Essita Duncan, Non-Farming Interest Representative (V)

Staff Attendees:

Fatimah Hasan, M-NCPPC (I)

Guest Attendees:

Heaven Jordan, Food Equity Council, (V)

Elizabeth Robinson, The Garden International (V)

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Steve Darcey invited guests to introduce themselves and provide brief remarks. Six members were present, which is a quorum.

2. Approval of ARAC minutes of February 1, 2023

Mr. Darcey asked for input on the September 7 meeting minutes. The minutes of the last meeting held on February 1 were approved; motion made by Dr. Bill Ritchie and seconded by Ms. Essita Duncan.

3. Nomination Procedure for New Chair and Co-Chair of ARAC

The nomination procedure produced a nomination for Chair, Ms. Pharyn Smith, and for Co-Chair, Mr. Dan Donohue. Both nominations motions were made by Dr. Ritchie and seconded by Ms. Jennifer Cross.

4. New Appointments and Expiring Terms for some members

The new appointments made this past July are:

- Prince George's County Farm Bureau Representative - Ms. Jennifer Cross
- Prince George's County Association of Realtors Representative – Ms. Cheryl Abrams Davis

Despite filling two positions this past July, there are additional positions that are still open:

- USDA Representative
- Maryland Cooperative Extension Representative
- Prince George's County Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board Representative
- Equine Industry Representative
- Ex-Officio Member Representative (selected by the County Executive)
- Ex-Officio Member Representative (selected by the County Council)

In addition, the terms of two representatives have expired:

- Soil Conservation District Representative – Steven E. Darcey, Expired 6/30/2023
- Citizen Member – Dr. Darren T. Gibson, Expired 6/30/2023

Ms. Fatimah Hasan agreed to provide an update on the reappointment process, specifically how to replace representatives whose terms have expired.

5. ARAC Report to the County Council with cover letter, and next steps

Ms. Hasan was asked to provide a cover letter, and it was agreed that the report would be sent to the County Council.

6. One-page Statement of mission, goals and objectives of ARAC

A suggestion was made to develop a one-page statement, and to provide a newsletter describing the activities of ARAC and upcoming events of interest. It might include highlights from the Annual Report and pictures from the farm tour in May 2023. Options for pursuing this initiative could include coordination among ARAC, the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, and the Prince George's County Office of Food Security. Ms. Heaven Jordan agreed to help in this effort.

7. Agricultural education and awareness

Ms. Smith suggested that ARAC can play a role in promoting workshops and educational events about farming practices and food systems, available to community members. It was agreed that ARAC members would think about and gather information to disseminate to the public, possibly through the ARAC webpage or other means. Ms. Isabella Bruno of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation was also suggested as a source of information, as well as the Alice Ferguson Foundation and Hard Bargain Farm.

8. Other Business

A possible subcommittee was discussed to develop the 2023 Annual Report to discuss appointments and reappointments, the updating of the ARAC webpage on the County Council's website, and future coordination with the University of Maryland (UMD) Extension, Maryland 4H Groups, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Gwynn Park High School, High Point H.S., and Fairmont Heights H.S., Future Harvest Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture (CASA), Firebird Farm, UMD College Park, and Bowie State University.

Another discussion was related to noise and disturbance of peace and quiet from agritourism events at various venues. Generally, wineries have been respectful, and there is a law on the books regulating such nuisances, but the police do not seem to be able to enforce it. The venues must be built around farm activities.

9. Next Meeting Date/Next Steps

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, November 9, 2023, 2:00-3:30 p.m. ARAC members asked to be updated regarding CB-093-2023, Nuisance Abatement Board legislation at the next meeting.

Ms. Cross and Ms. Elizabeth Robinson were interested in discussing "glamping" a glamorous version of camping. Mr. Donohue wanted to discuss logging difficulties, and that thinning of forest land is needed for soil conservation and wildlife habitat maintenance.

10. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 3:34 p.m.