

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ARAC) MINUTES

Virtual Meeting

December 13, 2023, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

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

ARAC Members:

Pharyn Smith, Chair and Citizen Member (I)

Dan Donohue, Co-Chair and Forestry Industry Representative (I)

Bill Ritchie, Citizen Member (V)

Jennifer Cross, Farm Bureau Representative (V)

Essita Duncan, Non-Farming Interest Representative (V)

Cheryl Abrams Davis, PGCAR Representative (I)

Staff Attendees:

Fatimah Hasan, M-NCPPC (V)

Charles Sasscer, UME (V)

Guest Attendees:

Renee Bacchus, Farmer

Heaven Jordan, Food Equity Council, (V)

Emily Lutz, M-NCPPC, CPD (V)

Elizabeth Robinson, The Garden International (V)

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 2:08 p.m. Ms. Pharyn Smith invited members and guests to introduce themselves. Six members were present, which is a quorum.

2. Approval of ARAC minutes of September 27, 2023

Ms. Smith asked for input on the September 27 meeting minutes. The minutes were approved; motion made by Mr. Dan Donohue and seconded by Dr. Bill Ritchie.

3. Updates

• Expiring Appointments Process

The terms of two representatives have expired: Soil Conservation District Representative – Steven E. Darcey, Expired 6/30/2023; and Citizen Member – Dr. Darren T. Gibson, Expired 6/30/2023. In addition, Dr. Ritchie noted that most of the ARAC members' terms expire on 6/30/2024, and there are other standing vacancies.

• ARAC Vacancies

The vacancies that currently need to be filled are representatives of UME, Land Preservation Advisory Board, USDA, equine, SCD, Citizen member (to fill Dr. Gibson's vacancy), and the two ex-officio members who have yet to be appointed by the County Executive and County Council (one each). We want to be in contact with the County Executive's Liaison, Ms. Brewer, early in 2024 to prepare for the transition and

establishing new members. ARAC members agreed. Ms. Cheryl Abrams Davis stated that she knows USDA employees who might possibly serve on ARAC. Ms. Fatimah Hasan noted that Ms. Esther Mitchell, UME expressed interest and she would reach out to her again to find out if she still wants to submit her paperwork to Ms. Brewer (Alan Leslie can no longer serve as UME representative, and Charles Sasscer cannot serve because he is staff to the ARAC Agricultural Reconciliation Subcommittee). Ms. Jennifer Cross mentioned that Delegate Fisher (MD State Legislature) could help with this task, and Dr. Ritchie said she is interested although it's been a challenge to touch base. Ms. Rene Bacchus was noted as someone who could be the next Citizen Member of ARAC.

- **CB-093-2023, Nuisance Abatement Board legislation**

ARAC members discussed this legislation, which refers to making adjustments to the existing Nuisance Abatement Board. Ms. Abrams stated that in MD we have a Right-to-Farm provision, which requires as part of a contract of sale, that the potential buyer is aware of a farm that is operating adjacent to or nearby the property that is for sale. Ms. Smith asked Ms. Cross about feedback from the Farm Bureau. Ms. Cross stated that any reports of nuisances should be called into 3-1-1, and it will be handled.

- **One-page Statement of ARAC Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

Ms. Hasan noted that Ms. Rana Hightower, M-NCPPC liaison to the County Council, was a contact person to gather information on pending County legislation that impacts the farm community. She would inquire about this, which would be a part of the ARAC mission (to give feedback on pending legislation), and get a one-page statement drafted. She would reach out to Ms. Canning about the ARAC webpage update.

4. Annual Reports

The 2022 Annual Report and cover letter were drafted. Dr. Ritchie noted that it needs to be revised to show Ms. Jolene Ivey as the Chair of the County Council. The 2023 Annual Report would be drafted by Ms. Hasan before the end of the year to facilitate a smooth transition after she retires and a replacement is named. Dr. Ritchie inquired about who would replace Ms. Hasan, who mentioned Ms. Emily Lutz, who was interested in possibly serving temporarily, but a decision needs to be made by M-NCPPC leadership. Ms. Smith welcomed Ms. Lutz or anyone as soon as possible so we don't lose momentum.

5. Other Business

Ms. Liz Robinson mentioned the National Urban Farm Festival and announced the website at nationalurbanfarmfest.com. The festival will include storytelling about seeds from around the world, by Falani Spivey, founder of the Byrd's Nest Box. Dr. Ritchie mentioned the possible participation at the festival of the National Society of Descendants of American Farmers, of which he is a national advisor.

6. Next Meeting Date/Next Steps

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 14 (second Wednesday of the month), 2:00-3:30 p.m.

7. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 3:42 p.m.