

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ARAC) MINUTES

In-person Meeting

September 11, 2024, 2:00-3:30 p.m. Adopted 12/11/24

ATTENDEES:

ARAC Members:

Pharyn Smith, Chair and Citizen Member
Dan Donohue, Co-Chair and Forestry Industry Representative
Bill Ritchie, Citizen Member
Jennifer Cross, Farm Bureau Representative (by phone)
Cheryl Abrams Davis, PGCAR Representative (by phone)
Steve Darcey, SCD

Staff Attendees:

Marian Honecny, M-NCPPC
Charles Sasscer, UME
Kathy Canning, County Council Legislative Officer

Public:

Julie Wolf, DoE
Jason Sierra, SCD Urban Agriculture

AGENDA:

Welcome and Introductions

2:20 pm meeting began without a quorum (one member notified group they would be late). The meeting began with the understanding that no votes or decisions could be made until a quorum was reached. The meeting began with an introduction of members and public.

Approval of ARAC minutes of May 1, 2024

The group agreed that minutes were correct and would take vote once there was a quorum.

NEW BUSINESS

Members: Update on Term Expirations and New Members Update

Re-Appointments

Mr. Dorsey, Mr. Ritchie, Mr. Donohue and Ms. Smith were reappointed this spring with a new term expiration date of 6/30/2027. Jennifer Cross should be reappointed this Fall. We may have a new member, Tracey Duval, who is expected to be appointed this fall.

The updated Committee Member Directory was handed out. Ms. Honecny explained the shading. Those who resigned were shaded out to remind members they resigned members still refer to these folks as members. The directory will be updated again after October 18th (county council's appointment meeting). Ms. Honecny was tasked to contact Ms. Brewer about the appointment paperwork deadlines for spring and fall. This will assist the committee members with recruitment.

ARAC Vacancies

The Chair requested that all members assist with filling vacancies. Mr. Darcy will ask about the County Land Preservation position and Mr. Sasscer will ask his office for an Extension member. Mr. Sierra was

asked if he could assist in recruiting an urban agricultural farmer for a citizen position. Mr. Ritchie brought up UMD students studying agriculture as possible citizen members.

Web page

Ms Honeczi briefed the committee on the updated to the committee webpage. The updated page meets Open Meeting Act requirements and should help with recruitment. She is still working on fixing the incorrect page on the county executive's website.

Discussion of 2023 Annual report: Requests and Recommendations

The Chair read the recommendations and requests, and the committee discussed the items. One idea discussed was adding membership to include Economic Development Corporation. Idea was tabled until the current positions are filled. Also, this would require legislation. EDC could be invited to meetings. The committee would also like to invite Planning Director Hull to future meetings.

Other discussion items

- Solar and agriculture. SCD expects this to be active during the 2025 MD Legislative Session. There was a general discussion on this topic including a recent editorial in The Baltimore Sun "Farm-based solar power can be a lifeline for agriculture", Aug 5.
- Logging. There will be a meeting with DPIE, DoE, loggers to discuss the hurdles (permits, bonds, etc.) to logging in the county.
- Idea for ARAC to host an information meeting for the public on ag programs to provide information on new programs and updated information on existing programs. Including Tree Farm, mixed use agriculture.
- Increase Park & Recreation land available for farming. Mr. Darcy stated its already happening with long term leases and discussed actual sites (Watkins Park as incubator site).

3:15 pm Quorum. May 1 meeting minutes were read into record and approved.

Member Highlights

- Mr. Donohue was appointed to Tree Farm Committee and represents the southern 5 counties.
- Mr. Sasscer held a tour for the MDA Secretary and visited Aquasco Farm, P.A. Bowen Farmstead, Janemark Winery and ended at Lucky Z Ranch.
- Mr Darcy and Ms Pharyn conducted an urban agriculture tour and Planning Director Hull attended.

Next Meeting/Agenda

Next meeting will be a farm tour. Mr. Darcey and Ms Davis volunteered to make arrangements.

Next Meeting: Farm Tour: Oct 30, start time 9 or 10 am and ends approximately 2:30 pm at a winery. More information to come.

7. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned.