

Agricultural Resources Advisory Committee (ARAC)

May 14, 2025 – VIRTUAL meeting

6 pm – 7 pm

MINUTES adopted 8/14/2025

Attendees: Pharyn Smith, Bill Ritchie, Jennifer Cross, Dan Donohue, Cheryl Abrams Davis, Tracey Duval.

Public attendees: Esther Mitchell, Julie Wolfe, Kathy Allen Glenn, Lakisha Hull, Katina Shoulars, Kim Rush Lynch

Meeting started at 6:05 pm

Old business:

- *Draft February 11, 2024, minutes – review/adopt:* did not have a quorum.

New business:

Introduced Esther Mitchell of UMD Extension who is interested in becoming a member. Will fill the UMD Extension vacancy. Since Ms Brewer, County Executive Appointment Liaison, has left her position, she will be sent the new staffer's contact information.

- *County rescinding thousands grant funding- Tracey :* There was a discussion, led by Tracey, about Tuesday's County Council meeting where grants were rescinded. The discussion centered on EcoCity Farms losing their grant funding and EcoCity's request for a letter of support to re-establish the funding for their farm. CM Olson (his district includes the location of EcoCity Farms) has asked the farm's program trainees to draft letters to the council members. Dan mentioned that the Food Equity Council was also impacted. The committee discussed a two-prong approach: a letter of support and a meeting with Chair Burroughs. Others requested that ARAC gather data on the impact – what farms beside EcoCity is impacted (grants went to nonprofits), how many participate in the incubator program, # of staff/trainees and dollars, and data on effect on feeding Prince Georgians. Hard data tells the story that elected officials can understand. Julie mentioned that Climate Smart Commodity program (DoE) also lost funding. Wants to share those who lost funding to group and will send out on Thurs.
TO DO:
 - LETTER: Pharyn will draft letter with data; email for review to group; comments due Tues.
 - MEETING: Coordinate with Kathy to set up meeting (include data); prepare email to set up meeting.
 - Tracey will share the EcoCity Farming's letters.
 - Julie will share those in the Climate Smart Commodity program who lost funding.
- *Impacts of defunded County Rain Check Rebate Program – Pharyn :* Pharyn briefly discussed.
- *Updates Montgomery County Econ Dev office Ag section– Dan :* He attended a meeting, as county representative, which discussed establishing livestock processing centers in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; a feasibility study is to be done; nearest center is Carroll. Next meeting week of May 26th.

- *Updates from the MD Farm Bureau – Jennifer Cross* : announced upcoming events: MD Young Farmers & Ranchers Picnic (\$) June 7th in Cecil County. Women’s Leadership for Farm Bureau event May 17th.
TO DO:
 - Jennifer will send out the flyers to the group.
- *Updates from National Urban Farm Festival – Bill* : Bill gave an overview of the event.
- *Recap of the Prince George’s Farmer & Producer Roundtable hosted by The Capital Market- Pharyn* : The roundtable discussed concerns over the funding cuts; need to educate DPIE regarding land use and M-NCPPC projects; and plannings’ impact on agriculture.
TO DO:
 - Pharyn will share her notes.
- *Touring Farmer’s Markets* : Need a volunteer to research and set up tours, handle logistics. Markets are on weekends.
TO DO:
 - Pharyn will create list, Cheryl to assist.
- *Follow-up action items from the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment Committee or County Council briefing on Agriculture in the County: 2022 Recommendation* : Per Dan, no follow up actions. CM Fisher sent a thank you note to Dan. Pharyn will review meeting recording.
- *Additional discussion item*: Lakisha Hull, Planning Director, mentioned three items: 1.She met with MDA Secretary Atticks to strategize on collaboration to bring back agriculture position at Planning Department; 2. More processing plants to the county, in discussions with CM Harrison to review land uses and zoning in place for farming; 3. At National Planning Conference in Denver, planning staff toured community gardens for future encouragement of these at public schools.
- Upcoming Events
 - o **Maryland Department of Agriculture** is seeking Maryland chefs and restaurants to submit original recipes using local Maryland ingredients to serve at the **Governor’s Buy Local Cookout DUE May 19th**
 - o UMD Hosting Ag Integrated Pest Management Web Series Thursday, May 15 at 12:01 PM
 - o Farm & Family Day Sept 7 FREE at Baden Firehouse in Brandywine. (No County Fair this year again)
 - o Free Seedling Tour – Kim will share flyer.
 - o Buy Local Challenge – last Monday in July
- Discussion on new evening meeting time and virtual format. Pharyn will send out a survey.

NEXT MEETING: July 9 Time TBD, format TBD.

Meeting ended at 6:56 pm