

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board
Meeting Date: Thursday, April 11, 2024
Generated by Lisa Ledman

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:10 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Phil Langley, Priscilla Leitch, James Moore, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

B. Welcome Guests

Kellie Hinkle, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Lisa Ledman, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Sue Veith, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Ben Cohen, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Caroline King, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development
Viv Marek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
Joan Bearden, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau
Shelby Watson-Hampton, Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission
Sydney Garner, Charles County Economic Development
Caroline Trossbach, Calvert County Economic Development
Anna Jensen, ACDS, LLC
Hillary Krummrich, ACDS, LLC

C. Approval of the February 8, 2024 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from February 8, 2024 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Bruce Young, second Kaitlin Fraer
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Phil Langley, James Moore, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

3. PRESENTATION

A. Pier Water International

Anna Jensen, from Pier Water International, spoke to the Board about the Agricultural and Aquaculture Analysis for Southern Maryland. This regional effort will support the agricultural and aquaculture value chain in the Southern Maryland region of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties by identifying potential gaps and needs assessment in the regional food supply chain. The study focuses on identifying the food supply chain from Southern Maryland farms to consumers and highlights processing, aggregation, and/or distribution challenges to achieve a fully functioning supply chain. The final report will provide actionable recommendations for development and investment to support the growth of agriculture and aquaculture in St. Mary's, Calvert, and Charles counties, with a specific focus on improving the regional supply chain. Also present from Pier Water International was Hillary Krummrich. Pier Water International is currently in the process of interviewing industry partners, anyone who would like to participate should contact Anna Jansen or Hillary Krummrich.

Anna Jansen also updated the Board about a similar Blue Catfish Feasibility Study also being conducted to determine if Blue Catfish harvest is a sustainable and competitive sector for small business and job creation in the Southern Maryland Counties of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's. The study will determine through development, if a market analysis and gap identification whether investment and expansion of this industry would contribute to meaningful job creation, economic development, sustainable livelihoods, and food security for the region.

B. Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Study

Ben Cohen gave a presentation to the Board explaining the purpose of the Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study is to evaluate the potential for a new passenger ferry service that could stimulate economic growth within each host community, provide improved access to the Bay, provide new water transportation connectivity options, and promote enhanced tourism opportunities throughout the region. The Board shared concerns that this could be seasonally affected by the weather and cost prohibitive by a private enterprise. There was also a concern that the Eastern Shore destinations may not be as economically developed. Ben Cohen stated that the study will end in July and hopefully test routes could begin in 1-3 years.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board met at the conclusion of the Board meeting and approved the MALPF request for a Family Lot Exclusion for the Hayden Property (MALPF File Number 18-07-00-08). Motion by Stephen Reeves, second Joseph Wood
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Phil Langley, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

C. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership includes Kaitlin Fraer, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, and Vacant Member of the Real Estate Community.

Priscilla Leitch updated the Board that the ARC was scheduled to meet on April 4, 2004, but was postponed by the County Attorney's Office on April 3, 2024. The ARC meeting will be rescheduled for a later date, to be determined. The ARC will need to meet to establish rules and procedures and elect a chair.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Justin Cheseldine-Gass informed the Board of SB32/HB120 in which Senator Jack Bailey and Delegate Matt Morgan are requesting to expand MARBIDCO funding to watermen.
Phil Langley spoke of wild oyster harvesters not being able to sell all of their catch and questioned if aquaculture farmers were having the same issue with the market.

B. Forestry Updates

Bruce Young reminded the Board that timber harvest land is still considered forest land and should not be cleared, stumps should remain in the ground and regrowth is to be allowed. There are extra fines for wetland disturbance.

C. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Priscilla Leitch reported that DED Staff was accepting MALPF Applications until May 15, 2024. This deadline will give staff time to evaluate all applications and rank them according to the Land Evaluation/Site Assessment (LESA) system.

Joseph Wood, who also serves on the State MALPF Board, mentioned that the State was considering to move to a 2 year funding cycle for MALPF Easements due to a shortfall of funding. While some counties may remain unaffected by this change, the Board expressed concern that in St. Mary's County the 2 year cycle could be less opportunities for interested property owners to participate and that consistent cycles are needed.

D. Rural Legacy

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek told the Board of a US Fish and Wildlife Service Proposal to Establish Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge. The Service proposes to create a new Refuge to be named the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge would consist of four watershed -

based units in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties the Lower Patuxent - Calvert Unit, Nanjemoy - Mattawoman Unit, Zekiah – Wicomico Unit, and McIntosh Run - St. Mary's Unit. The total area encompassed by the proposed Refuge acquisition boundary is approximately 577,420 acres, of which the Service could acquire a maximum of 40,000 in fee - title acquisitions or conservation easements from willing sellers. Within the remaining acreage, or Conservation Partnership Area, the Service will make a concerted effort to apply Coastal Program and Partners for Fish and Wildlife funding and staffing resources, and coordinate and pool funds and other resources with the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance and other partners to implement on-the-ground restoration and conservation projects.

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – Caroline King shared that at the March meeting of the Maryland Board of Public Works, 2 Boothe easements were approved for purchase totaling about 234 acres.

Priscilla Leitch announced that there were changes to the County's Capital Improvement Projects Budget to allow for the forward funding of incidental expenses using County funding.

E. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC)

Priscilla Leitch shared that the St. Mary's County Department of Public Works & Transportation has submitted site plans for the RAC for approval (there is a 2-week waiting period for comments from the Health Department and Fire Marshal). The County hopes to have a Request for Proposal ready to be released in June.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Curriculum of Agricultural Science Education

Joan Bearden requested a letter of support from the Board to be sent to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County supporting Farm Bureau's initiative to have an agriculture education program returned to a classroom at the high school level. The Board discussed the benefits of hosting and promoting agriculture education in the classroom.

I move to send a letter to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County supporting the Farm Bureau's effort to return the Curriculum of Agricultural Science Education in the St. Mary's County Public School System. Motion by James Moore, second Michael Sirk

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Phil Langley, James Moore, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

B. Board Member Open Comment Period

Phil Langley told the Board that the permit for the relocation of the 301 Bridge Demo materials for artificial reef in the Potomac River expired. The last shipments were redirected to St. Jerome's Creek and Smith Creek.

Joseph Wood questioned the relocation the Flea Market in Charlotte Hall now that demolition on the site has begun. Bruce Young stated that commercial development was going to take place along the Route 5 frontage and the market would move to a location on the backside of the property. Ben Beale questioned the selling of imported fruit/vegetables/produce year round on farm and private property and if there were zoning regulations for this.

D. Partner Updates

None.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the April 11, 2024 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Stephen Reeves, second by Michael Sirk

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Kaitlin Fraer, Phil Langley, James Moore, Richard Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young