

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board (Thursday, June 9, 2022)

Generated by Lisa Ledman

Members present

Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Alan Polk Donna Sasscer, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:10 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Alan Polk Donna Sasscer, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

B. Welcome Guests

Chris Kaselemis, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Kellie Hinkle, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Lisa Ledman, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Sue Veith, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Allison Burnett, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development

Viv Marek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

Jamie Raley, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau

Brian Wathen, University of Maryland Extension

Michael Degen, Tax Assessor, St. Mary's County

Mary Wood

B. Approval of the April 14, 2022 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from April 14, 2022 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting.

Motion by Joseph Wood, second Bonnie Browne

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Alan Polk Donna Sasscer, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

3. PRESENTATION

A. Agriculture Tax Assessments

Michael Degen the Tax Assessor for St. Mary's County addressed the Board's concerns over the assessment of agriculture land and buildings where perceived commercial activities are taking place. He explained that farming is a commercial business but receives a special assessment in the state of Maryland. If other commercial aspects occur on the farm then the buildings and land associated with that activity will be reassessed. The farm as a whole will remain assessed as agriculture and only the activity area will be reassessed. The County level assessors assess according to the state regulation. In the case of weddings, if a structure is primarily used for agriculture and the wedding activity is a secondary activity then the structure will not be reassessed, however if new construction/renovations occur or the space is dedicated to weddings only then the structure will be reassessed.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Farmers Markets

Subcommittee membership includes Joe Wood, Phil Langley, Scott Bacon, and Phil Dorsey. The Barns at New Market seasonal building is open Monday through Saturday from 9 am until 4 pm. The California Farmers Markets is on Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm. The Home Grown Farm Market is open Saturdays only from 9 am until 1 pm and during the summer on Wednesdays from 10 am until 2 pm.

B. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Steve Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood.

Met at the conclusion of Board meeting to discuss 1 Lot Request on a MALPF Easement property and the ranking for FY2023 MALPF Applications. The following motions were made: I move to approve the revised Lot Request from MALPF File # 18-20-10. Motion by Joseph Wood, second Alan Polk.

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Alan Polk, Joseph Wood

I move to approve the Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) Ranking of the FY2023 MALPF Applications. Motion by Alan Polk, second Joseph Wood.

Yea: Phil Langley (by telephone), Alan Polk, Joseph Wood (Steve Reeves recused himself from this vote)

C. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership include Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Charles Mattingly, Alan Polk, and Steve Reeves.

No update.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

No update as Phil Langley is at the Potomac Fishery meeting at the same time as this meeting.

B. The Barns at New Market

Donna Sasscer updated the Board that just days after signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the County, the company that was going to manager the Barns decided to not fulfil the agreement. This has caused the County to re-evaluate how the market will be managed. The Department of Public Works and Transportation has ordered equipment including freezer and refrigerator cases. Once these are received the Value-Added building will open on Saturdays only with meat and seafood producers inside. There already seems to be a problem with parking in the front lot, staff is looking at options to help with this. The trail is complete but signage is needed. The horse barn is constructed however final approvals have not yet been obtained.

C. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Donna Sasscer informed the Board that 10 FY2023 applications have been ranked and once approved by the County Lane Preservation Advisory Board and Commissioners of St. Mary's County, they will be forwarded to the state for easement consideration. FY2022 offers have been made, and 1 is currently pending acceptance. Staff will work to complete a Baseline Inspection for a pending FY2021 Easement property. Staff has completed 30 annual inspections on MALPF Easements.

D. Rural Legacy

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek told the Board that PTLT has closed on a 100 acre easement in the Huntersville Rural Legacy Area.

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – Allison Burnett updated the Board that RC&D has closed on a 106 acre easement in the Mattapan Rural Legacy Area. RC&D would like to host landowner outreach sessions for topics of concern. Ben Beale stated that Extension is hosting a Best Management Practices Cost Share seminar in September and offered for RC&D to co-host. Donna Sasscer asked if a session on tax implementations from land preservation could be hosted.

E. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC)

Mary Wood shared that the Regional Agriculture Center Project is on schedule.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Board Member Open Comment Period

Phil Dorsey updated the Board on a focus group he recently attended for the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Study. This plan needs to be updated every 5 years.

Ben Beale shared that there was a new 4-H Agent for St. Mary's County, Susan Vallandingham. He also shared that the Family Consumer Science Agent recently resigned and the position is now available.

Ben Beale also updated the Board that recent Avian Influenza outbreaks in Maryland have been contained to the Eastern Shore. Ducks at the National Mall have tested positive, wild bird species are not usually affected but this has been found in vultures and eagles as well. The Tri-County Animal Auction has ceased selling poultry, also an executive order prohibits the exhibition of poultry.

Bruce Young announced that his office will be hiring a Federal Soil Conservationist and 2 Maryland Department of Agriculture positions to assist with the Watershed Implementation Plan, agriculture goals must be met by June 2025.

Allison Burnett told the Board that the Spotted Lantern Fly has been confirmed in Hartford County.

B. Partner Updates

None.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the April 14, 2022 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Joseph Wood, second Bonnie Browne

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Dorsey, Alan Polk Donna Sasscer, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

