

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board

Meeting Date: Thursday, November 9, 2023

Generated by Lisa Ledman

Approved: December 14, 2023

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 Langley, Priscilla Leitch, James Moore, James "Bubby" Norris, Richard Polk, 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

Jessica McGlinsey, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development

Viv Marek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

Joan Bearden, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau

C. Approval of the June 8, 2023 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from June 8, 2023 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Joseph Wood, second Michael Sirk

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Langley, James Moore, James "Bubby" Norris, Richard Polk, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

3. PRESENTATION

A. Chesapeake Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) Route Network (CURN)

Ben Griffith, University of Maryland UAS Research & Operations Center briefed the Board on a feasibility study for a UAS route network overlying the Chesapeake Bay. Such a network would be designed to enable unmanned aircraft to be flown safely within airspace that also included conventional, piloted aircraft. In addition, UAS utilizing the network would be able to fly beyond visual line of sight and over populated areas. Recently the University of Maryland Extension was able to hire a Precision Agriculture Agent who will attempt to streamline processes available for agriculture related projects. Jessica McGlinsey stated that RC&D would like to explore the option of using drones for inspections of non-accessible areas on their easements.

B. Paladin Automation LLC

David Zyga introduced himself as an industry partner who is available to serve small business and landowners. His company is looking to explore niche operations to expand their UAS capabilities. Currently his company is working with the St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission for cell and water tower inspections and Historic St. Mary's City to digitize their structure preservation efforts.

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 now open Monday – Saturday (closed Tuesdays & Thursdays) from 9 am until 4 pm. There is a Holiday Market open in the Value Added Building on Saturdays from 9 am until 2 pm. Both markets will close for the season on December 16, 2023.

The Home Grown Farm Market is open Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm year round (closed for Christmas and New Years). There will be a special Holiday Market on Sunday, December 3, 2023 from 11:30 am until 3:30 pm. The California Farmers Markets is open on Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm until November 18, 2023.

B. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. The Subcommittee met on October 26, 2023 and approved 2 Family Lot Release Request and 2 options to cure violations of Easement properties.

C. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

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

No update.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Phil Langley updated the Board that there was an Oyster Bar Survey completed which determined there was a lot of natural death this year due to high salinity and a dry year.

B. Forestry Updates

Ben Beale told the Board of a new facility now open off Big Chestnut Road in Leonardtown. A Mennonite family is leasing the facility and has converted it into a pine shaving mill which will expand Mr. Zimmerman's current operation. These shavings are primarily hauled to Pennsylvania and the owner is looking for back haul litter options.

C. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Sue Veith stated that nine (9) applications for the FY24 easement cycle were received from St. Mary's County landowners totaling 447 acres.

D. Rural Legacy

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek updated the Board that there are 2 pending easements on the verge of closing. PTLT hosted a 5K Fun Run on October 14, 2023 at Point Lookout State Park. This event served as a fundraiser as well as offered community outreach.

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – Jessica McGinsley shared that RC&D is continuing to monitor existing easements and working to secure new properties. There is strong landowner interest in the program. RC&D has received their FY24 State grant funds however still has funds from the FY23 grant to spend but are limited on committing to new easements until the pending easements settle to be reimbursed for the forward funding on incidental expenses. Currently it takes about a year for RC&D to be reimbursed for these expenses. The Board would like to explore opportunities to expedite this process or offer other solutions for forward funding of incidental expenses.

E. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC)

Sue Veith updated the Board that the site plan for the RAC was delayed as the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) was requesting special septic requirements. The St. Mary's County Department of Public Works and Transportation and the Maryland Department of Health met with MDE and have agreed monitor the affluent of the current proposed system to deem if it is adequate or if a Best Available Technology System is needed.

Joseph Wood requested the Board send a letter to thank the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and their staff along with the members of the Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission (SMADC) for their efforts to date to move this project forward. The RAC is an important component in enhancing value-added processing of local agriculture products.

Motion by Joseph Wood, second Phil Langley

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Langley, James Moore, James "Bubby" Norris, Richard Polk, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

F. Lothian Grain Elevator

Ben Beale informed the Board that Anne Arundel County selected Warfield Brothers to manage and operate grain elevator portion of the facility. The facility opened on October 13, 2023, but paid a lower payment than neighboring facilities.

Joseph Wood requested the Board send a letter to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County encouraging them to acknowledge and support Anne Arundel County for their investment and efforts to retain the Lothian Grain Elevator for the benefits it provides to our regional agricultural community. The Board would also like to request the Commissioners support of future projects to expand the grain marketing industry such as a grain barge, if that opportunity becomes available regionally so all farmers could participate.

Motion by Joseph Wood, second James "Bubby" Norris

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Langley, James Moore, James "Bubby" Norris, Richard Polk, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young

G. Maryland Nutrient Management Program

Ben Beale updated the Board that the Maryland Department of Agriculture entered into an agreement with UMD Extension to reinstate the Nutrient Management Plan Writers, following listening sessions held in July where farmers expressed their displeasure of the original announcement. Both agencies will work to seek more permanent funding to sustain the program.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Board Member Open Comment Period

Mr. Polk expressed displeasure that the Forestry Industry is not list as a priority in the St. Mary's County Department of Economic Development Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

Ben Beale told the Board of his upcoming Crops Conference on December 7, 2023 and the Loveville Produce Auction Annual Meeting on December 8, 2023

C. Partner Updates

None.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the November 9, 2023 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Joseph Wood, second by Richard Polk

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Stephen Reeves, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Phil Langley, James Moore, James "Bubby" Norris, Richard Polk, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood, Bruce Young