

September 11, 1963

Special meeting.

Present: All commissioners, Senator J. Frank Raley, Jr., Mr. B. Smith, Delegate J. H. Briscoe, and representatives from various state and county agencies.

Drought Problems

Mr. B. Smith reported that a committee had investigated as to whether or not St. Mary's County might be considered a 5B Area. According to the regulations governing this, we are not in such a situation. As to unemployment, we are favorable with the national average but could not get under the 5B because of this. The unemployment level must be 50% above the average of the three years preceding. Our income is favorable when you compare it to the national average, also. Further studies will have to be made to determine if we could possibly come under the 5B Program.

Even if ARA cannot help us, there are many other programs in existence. ARA is only available when there are no other sources of aid. ASC - feed and grain have been requested but no further action can be taken until they hear from the state office. The county officials might ask that the state office hurry this approval along, but the county can do nothing until they hear from the state. There is a good chance we will have a feed and grain program, probably within the next 30 days. St. Mary's County must make it clear that the need exists. ASC has requested the information to carry this on to a national approval for the surplus feed and grain. The committee is interested in having Western Maryland and Southern Maryland designated as areas for the feed program. The hay program has been approved and the only help on this is the freight discount.

Money for the hay program must come from the individual. All the southern counties have been designated as emergency counties. This designation puts the FHA in a position to provide farmers with money to get the hay if no money is available, or grain, so long as they are not competing with private credit in any way. The only advantage is the reduction in freight rates. This is in the hands of the railroads just now and they have not decide to grant this reduction. The feed and grain program would involve people who have breeding stock or dairy herds to buy grain at 75% of support prices, plus the cost of bringing it in. This has been requested at the county level but the state committee has not decided to go through with it yet.

Farmers who will not have the benefit of their crops as collateral can now borrow money from the Farm Home Administration at 3%. These are the people who cannot be financed with other sources of credit.

Senator Raley read joint letter from Messrs. Sickles and Lankford which stated that request for participation in emergency program will not be granted until this year's crop is harvested. There is such a small amount of grain in St. Mary's County that probably none of it will be sent out of the county, but will be used on the farms. Under the feed and grain program a farmer can buy corn for \$1.05 to feed his livestock, provided he is not increasing his livestock. Would have to get local feed dealers to handle the program. This would be bought through Mrs. Guy's office. A slip would be gotten from her and she in turn would reimburse the feed dealers.

With the many areas needing hay, and the shortage of same, prices are not going to be to good. Mr. Ben Smith said he had investigated prices and Canada said they do have hay available and would be willing to truck it in, and he had a list of places who will be willing to do this if anyone is interested. Hay would be somewhere around \$50 out of Canada. The farmers in St. Mary's County are more interested in the feed and grain program than in the hay program, however.

This is as much as can be done at the county level, so now some kind of temporary employment must be found for these people. Perhaps some kind of public works programs and some of the ideas are opening up fire breaks. The state or some municipal body must put up 50% of the money and the other 50% can probably be obtained from the federal government. Tree planting can be done, with the government paying 80% and the landlord 20%. Approximately \$50,000 can be gotten for fire control efforts. Getting federal aid would depend on getting this area classified as a disaster area, from the standpoint of labor. In tree planting there is about roughly \$32,000 could be spent here, and this could begin in the middle of October, but that would be predicated on getting a little bit of rain, as it would be senseless to plant trees in the dry ground. The Dept. of Forests and Parks would supply the trees. \$4,000 could be spent controlling undesirable trees, 50% available from the federal government and 50% locally. There is no money available this year for development of parks, only for acquisition of same. There will be no development work on any parks until plans are made available, and if the plans were available, there is a possibility of some work being done here. The Point Lookout area could be cleaned up even if it is not being developed at present, to provide some employment. If the local money is available, something can be started on this right away. Hiring the people would have to be set up locally.

There is about \$8,000 available at the state level for emergency purposes, it might be possible that a portion of this could be allocated to St. Mary's County but it must be kept in mind that this is not the only county having disaster problems. There are some funds held at a national level for such an emergency program for feeding and grasses in drought areas. These funds have never been requested from Maryland but this will be investigated.

A scarcity of funds makes it possible that only a limited program can be carried on irrigation ponds on individual farms. However, this is being explored to see if additional funds can be made available. The Soil Conservation Service does the technical work on the ponds but does not handle any funds. This would come under the ACP Program. The SCS does have funds for the watershed program. There is a watershed in St. Mary's County which is the St. Mary's River, but this must be generated with local interest.

If a need is felt for surplus, perhaps we could pool with Charles and Calvert Counties and have a coordinated effort. Possibility our county agents could estimate how much food or how much money is going to be needed, certainly a considerable amount of the food might be taken care of by the supplemental food program, and the balance would be dollars that the people would have to earn. Within the attempt to employ these people there are just so many man hours or dollars that they are going to have to have and if we knew what it was it would give us something to point to. A public works program under the SRC might also be possible.

Overall Economic Development Program would be good thing to have, as this pulls together all planning ideas, and can also be used to educate the people. Technical problems now and in the future can be considered. All agencies would meet and discuss the condition of the county, such as what resources are available and how they can be used to supply some kind of development. This group must plan ahead. This is required by law before you can get a loan. The findings of this group can be used as a work plan. Fifteen to twenty-five people should be on the OEDP, and include forestry, agriculture, industry, recreation, etc., representatives. State and federal government will help you set up the OEDP. Ben Smith said that such a program is underway.

Mr. B. Briscoe reported that railroad cars are going to be put on the siding in Hollywood and pulpwood will be shipped out of St. Mary's County. This will provide jobs in the woods for about 100 to 125 people this winter. Also said that a training program would provide operators for the dress factory in Leonardtown, where approximately 40 operators are now working, but there is a potential of 200.

Mr. Thompson said he would prefer that employment on SRC be handled by the commissioners, but he would provide equipment needed. This way the county would only have to pay the men and not have to put up any money.

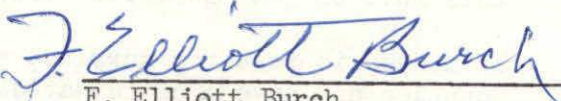
Representative from RADP, U. of M., stated a survey has been made to try to estimate drought damages in the counties, and this will be published in two or three weeks.

Senator Raley said that a committee is needed to guide any program planned. A technical action panel might do this and keep the county informed. The governor's office will have the chairman of the commissioners from each county form a committee. The commissioners should appoint certain individuals for each phase of the exploring process and have them report to the commissioners as to their findings.

Technical Action Panel appointed as follows: F. McCoy, B. Smith, T. Mallow, T. Hall, Johns Dixon, John Hodges, J. Wilmer Bowles, Mrs. Mary C. Guy.

Meeting adjourned.

Approved,


 F. Elliott Burch
 President