

MONTGOMERY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
January 13, 2023

Approved
3-10-23

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) was held Friday, January 13, 2023, in person and virtually on the GoToMeeting platform.

People Present:

Robert Butts, Vice Chairman
Tim McGrath, Treasurer (virtually)
Linda Lewis, Supervisor
Doug Tregoning, Supervisor (virtually)
Joe Lehman, Associate Supervisor
Chris Miller, Associate Supervisor
Adam Lyon, MDA (virtually)
Jeremy Criss, OAG
Mike Scheffel, OAG
Kelly Nichols, Extension
Natalia Salazar, Extension
Sam Engler, District Conservationist (NRCS)
John Zawitoski, District Manager (MSCD)
Ibraheem Jastaniah, (MDA) (virtually)
Kathleen Sigwart, (MDA) (virtually)
Karen Walker, Office Service Coordinator (MSCD)

The Vice Chairman Robert Butts, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and the agency reports were the first item on the agenda.

Agency Reports:

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (MDA) – Adam Lyon, MDA Patuxent Area Coordinator presented his report. Adam provided a few updates and shared MDA is in the process of getting new MDA staff oriented in their positions as conservation planners and technicians. Adam mentioned the planners hired for St. Mary's and Anne Arundel are under his jurisdiction and he provided additional information about these individuals. Adam indicated that MDA is in the last round of recruitment and are trying to fill in the gaps they have statewide. He mentioned MDA is evaluating the needs for positions within his region as well as statewide. He noted an outreach and training coordinator position is included as well as regional technical staff to provide design work. The annual salary review was also a part of the discussion but there is no definitive word on state salary increases. However, Adam mentioned there is generally a feeling among senior staff that the salary increase effort will be successful. He is hopeful state salaries will be more in line with the salaries of partnering agencies. Adam shared Personal Evaluations Performance (PEPs) have been done and he noted that all the state hires had a very successful year and that 2023 was looking good too. He noted both Ibraheem and Kathleen have progressed quickly and done a fantastic job. Both have obtained level one certification and paperwork is being processed to reflect their upgrade in the planner series.

Adam then shared the Maryland Soil Health Competitive Fund that was mentioned in the last board meeting now has more details concerning the program on the MDA website. He said the applications are downloadable and noted Kevin Antoszewski is the contact person for any questions. MDA is appreciative of the District's getting the word out in support of the program.

Following the Soil Health information, Adam shared 2 sign-up announcements concerning Nutrient Management. The Consultant Exam will be held in headquarters on February 7th at 9 a.m. and the Annual update training will be virtual on February 14th.

Adam then provided the Board updated information concerning BMP verification update. Adam indicated that he expected new members of the verification team to join Jillian Pyle in our office to begin their training. He also noted Steve Connelly is currently, the Acting Secretary of Agriculture and that there was no news on the Governors appointment for Secretary of Agriculture.

After Adam presented his report, John asked if there is any word on the State Budget for FY24. It was mentioned in the MASCD Summer meeting there is a projected structural shortfall. Adam responded there is really nothing new and said they have met with DBM and there is a shortfall based on all the positions that were hired. Fortunately, those positions are covered. He noted they are still gathering information on the actuals and really will not know until July. Adam doesn't want to speculate about cuts without having all the information. John is concerned for the funding for non-state employees, that is provided for the District Managers and the administrative support positions.

Extension – Kelly Nichols - U of MD - addressed the Board Members and extended her apologies for not having the report available for the meeting and noted her official report will be emailed following the meeting. Kelly provided information about several training opportunities and events and then invited Natalia Salazar to provide information concerning nutrient management. Natalia shared that MDA has informed her supervisor, David Ruppert, on their current decision regarding nutrient management plan requirements for eligibility for the 2023 Cover Crop Program. The decision is that partial 2023 nutrient management plans will be accepted (for 2023 cost-share and general compliance) only if accompanied by a full-year 2024 plan (this part has not changed from last year) and they are now defining a partial plan as one developed once fertilizer has already been applied or the opportunity for a fertilizer application has passed. In 2024, however, partial plans will not be accepted even if accompanied by a full-year 2025 plan. Natalia shared that MDA's stance has changed in the past few weeks and could change in the future. Kelly shared her frustration with MDA's lack of communication and asked John and Adam to keep her informed if they receive any updates. Kelly's official report is listed below.

Upcoming Events

- **Central Maryland Forage Conference** - Thursday, January 19, from 9:00am-3:00pm at the New Midway Volunteer Fire Company in Frederick County. Registration is \$25; lunch is included. For more information, visit the event website.
- **Produce Safety Rule Grower Training** – Monday, January 23, 2023, from 8:30am-5:00pm, at the Frederick County Extension Office. This training is for farmers interested in learning about produce safety; it will also satisfy the Produce Safety Rule food safety training requirement. Registration is \$35; lunch is included. For more information and to register, visit the training website.
- **So You Want to Own Rural Land in Maryland: Basic Legal Issues for All Landowners** - Thursday, January 26, 2023, 9:30am-3:30pm, at the Washington County Extension Office in Boonsboro. Topics will include right-to-farm law, leasing, estate planning, fencing lawn, livestock liability, and issues related to solar leasing. Registration is free and lunch is provided. For more information and to register, visit agrisk.umd.edu/events.
- **Central Maryland Vegetable Growers Meeting** – Thursday, January 26, from 8:00am-12:30pm, at Summit Manor at Hereford Fire Hall in Monkton, Baltimore County. Registration is \$20; lunch is included. For more information, visit the event website.

- **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training** – Friday, January 27, 2023, from 8:30am-4:30pm at the Ag History Farm Park. There are options to attend in-person or virtual, and the meeting is free. For more information and to register, visit the training website.
- **Beginning Farmer Course** – This 10-week course will be held on Thursday evenings from 7:00pm-8:30pm from February 2 through April 6, 2023. The course will be a blend of in-person and virtual classes. Registration is \$65. For more information and to register, visit the course website.
- **Power Couples Event** – February 4-5. See flier on the next page for more information.
- **AIR Help Day** – Wednesday, February 8, at the Montgomery County Extension Office. Drop by anytime between 8:30am and 12:00pm to get help with your Nutrient Management Annual Implementation Report (AIR). Extension and MDA staff will be on hand to answer questions. A laptop will also be available for those who wish to complete their AIR online during the help day.
- **Central Maryland Agronomy Update** – Wednesday, February 22, 2023, from 9:00am-3:00pm at the Urbana Fire Hall. Registration is \$20 and includes a light breakfast and lunch. To register, visit go.umd.edu/2023cmau.

Adam shared details concerning an emailed announcement in reference partial nutrient management plans and explained the importance of having cooperators come in early to have their nutrient management plans updated. Adam indicated that cooperators were having nutrient management plans written very late in the growing year within the May-June timeframe when corn and beans had already been planted, and their “current plan” was being obtained for eligibility for the cover crop program. Obviously, that is not the intent of the nutrient management program. Adam explained the email detailed that that Extension Nutrient Management Advisors would no longer be allowed to write plans that do not cover an entire year. Participants are encouraged to come in Oct., Nov., Dec. of the previous year to ensure they have a plan for springtime. Reporting a plan on corn and beans in the May-June timeframe is not supported by the Department. Kelly asked for further clarification and Adam noted there is a need to have clarification and he is sure it will be a topic for the Update Training that is scheduled for February 14th. John asked if Natalia will be willing to partner with the District on an article for the upcoming publication of the MSCD newsletter to address the nutrient management update information and Natalia responded with a yes.

OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE: Jeremy presented the report for OAG, and he addressed the items listed below.

- **Bill 40-21- Individual Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Systems - Amendments (McCartney-Green)**. Jeremy explained that during the October 24, 2022, Transportation and Environment Committee work session several questions were raised by the council that DEP staff did not have all the information. Another T&E Committee work session will be scheduled with the new County Council. This work session is scheduled for February 13th.
- **Bill 18-22 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments** - Bill 18-22- Noise Control- Leaf Removal Equipment was introduced on June 21, 2022, and the Public Hearing was on September 20, 2022. Some of the agricultural groups remitted letters to the County Council opposing the Bill 18-22 which prohibits gasoline leaf blowers. A County Council work session with the new Council. Jeremy indicated that there are discussions from County Council members concerning some proposed exemptions regarding the prohibition of gasoline leaf blowers. Provided below and incorporated into the minutes is a link to the more information concerning this legislation:
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2022/20220920/20220920_9.pdf
- **Office of Legislative Oversight on the Status of TDRs and BLTs** – This draft report has been remitted to the County Administrative Officer and they have responded back to OLO staff on Wednesday. The Council is expected to release the report next Tuesday. The findings from this report shows that the County Government and MNCPPC have not proposed new receiving capacity for TDRs

since 2012. The findings also show that the imbalance of TDRs in the sending area (-4,565 TDRs) is more than three times higher than the total TDR capacity in receiving areas (-966 TDRs). The OAG is hopeful that the new Planning Board and new County Council will help to address the imbalance of TDRs that has existed since the program began and take the necessary actions to get the TDR program back on track.

- **UME Staff updates-** Chuck Schuster is serving as the Acting/Interim Area Extension Director that Rick Walter held. There are three candidates that have applied for the Area Extension Director and Presentations were held on January 4, 2023. In other staff actions:
 - a. Interviews for the candidates that applied for the Master Gardeners administrative position replacing Linda Walters were held on December 21, 2022, and several candidates are promising.
 - b. The 4H Agent Associate position that Santana Mays held was posted on September 29, 2022, and it closed on October 28, 2022, and the applicants are under review.
 - c. University of Maryland Extension is seeking to fill **ten (10) Tech Extension Educator/Navigator** positions, with one position at each of the following county Extension office locations: Central Maryland (1 position in Montgomery or Howard County). Jeremy does not know if this position will be assigned in Montgomery or Howard County?
- **FY 23 Operating Budget for the OAG:** The BDS position that Kristin Fisher once held and prior to 2010 was offered to Natalia Salazar and she accepted the position and will be starting with the OAG later this month and the MSCD Engineering Position-Technical assistance on small ponds was posted twice. The OHR is allowing the MSCD to interview on January 20, 2023, the one candidate that has applied.
- **Update on the FY22 Farm to Food Bank-F2FB Program-** There are 25 applications from participating farmers to the capacity building grants program (up to \$10,000) for the third year of the program. There are 18 applicants that will receive Grants and funding for the 2023 growing season
- **Update on the New County Council for 2023** -The leaders of the Agricultural Groups met with the six new Council members on Tuesday. The Office of Agriculture (OAG) has been assigned to the new Planning, Housing and Parks Committee and Andrew Friedson will be the chairman. Jeremy indicated that the new council members are very interested in agriculture and OAG provided contact information including email addresses and phone numbers to each new member. He also noted a former 4-H and Fair Queen, Caitlin Gardner is a legislative aid for Councilwoman Dawn Luedtke. Jeremy provided Caitlin with the current 4-H staff contact information.

Provided below is that current council President and Vice President and committee assignments:

Evan Glass, **President**; Andrew Friedson, **Vice President**

Planning, Housing and Parks-Andrew Friedson, Chair, Will Jawando, Natali Fani-Gonzales

Economic Development- Natali Fani-Gonzales, Chair, Marilyn Balcombe, Laurie Ann Sayles, Evan Glass

Government Operations-Kate Stewart, Chair, Andrew Friedson, Sidney Katz

Public Safety- Sidney Katz, Chair, Dawn Luedtke, Kristin Mink

Education-Will Jawando, Chair, Gabe Albornoz, Kristin Mink

HHS-Gabe Albornoz, Chair, Laurie Ann Sayles, Dawn Luedtke

T&E-Evan Glass, Chair, Kate Stewart, Marilyn Balcombe

- **Article on the Wells #2 and #3 in Poolesville that were taken offline because of detected Forever Chemicals-** These wells are located towards the center of town and in residential areas. Incorporated

into the minutes below is the link to the WUSA9 article and another article regarding the WSSC Bloom product containing PFAS:

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/investigations/toxins-in-poolesville-drinking-water/65-292eae8d-f798-4203-8b55-496bdf3a28e2>

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/05/25/pfas-pfos-forever-chemicals-garden-fertilizers/7418828002/>

Jeremy then reported on a meeting that was held at the Ag History Farm Park on Monday January 9, 2023, where the Agricultural Leaders discussed a proactive strategy moving forward. Jeremy explained to the group that Caroline Taylor is quoted in the article where she shares her beliefs that the source of contamination is from farmers applying fertilizer and other biosolid products. Jeremy feels that it's too soon to tell where the contamination is coming from. He mentioned the 2 wells are older and provide about 25% of the total water supply and if the 2 wells are not able to get back online, there may be a water shortage during the summer. MDE conducts tests water from municipal water systems, but this is the first time that they are testing for PFA's. MDA regulates products like Bloom. Jeremy informed the group of a webinar that is scheduled for January 26th that will discuss the relationship between PFA's and Biosolids that is researched based. Following the webinar, Jeremy will schedule another meeting at the AHFP with scientists and other representatives familiar with the PFA's and Biosolids research. Jeremy noted it will not be a public meeting and just for invited guests with the date of the meeting sometime at the end of January or the first week of February.

To be proactive, Jeremy recommended farmers to temporary suspend the usage of bloom until more information is obtain. He shared from an article, EPA in Michigan condemned a farm, purchased the cows and the farmer is not allowed to sell any crops produced on the farm. Jeremy doesn't want that to happen here. Jeremy mentioned that Maine has set PFA's limits so low that it has effectively banned the use of all biosolids from municipal treatment plants on farmland. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter. Jeremy said the good news is fertilizer can't be applied until March and we have some time to do research.

- **Agricultural Trainings and Workshops:** Jeremy indicated that Carol Allen has aided in this effort and 24 persons have registered and this includes farmers in the region. There is a need to raise the bar and get more folks GAP certified. **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Training:** Date: Friday, January 27th from 8:30am – 4:30pm (must attend the full day to receive the MDA training certification certificate) Location: Ag History Farm Park 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood MD 20855 – or there is also a virtual option available if needed. Cost: Free - This training is for fruit/vegetable producers interested in developing a good safety plan and build a food safety culture on their farms; farmers that want help writing their food safety plan (80% will be completed during this training); farmers that want to increase their market access (potential institutional buyers require MD Gap Certification).

Beginning Farmer Training Course - will be a 10-week course, meeting every Thursday evening from 7:00pm-8:30pm from **February 2 through April 6, 2023**. The course kick-off class on February 2 and the graduation class on April 6 will be held in-person at one of several locations across the state, including the Montgomery County Extension Office. All other classes will be offered via Zoom. Classes will be taught by Extension Educators from around the state. Topics include marketing; financial planning; soil health; licenses, permits, and certifications; food safety; integrated pest management; acquiring land and zoning; and specialty crops. Cost for the course is \$65. A flyer is attached.

Additional educational opportunities can be found on the OAG website by accessing the calendar of events.

The last item Jeremy reported on concerned calls received about a goofy, bogus article entitled “Bio-Enviro” announcing ag planning for 1,600 acres campus at Montgomery County Agricultural Preserve. Jeremy noted when the word Preserve is used the source has no idea what they are talking about. It’s not the Agricultural Preserve, it is the Agricultural Reserve. After the OAG report was presented, John shared that Adam placed in the chat box, that MDE plans to make an announcement in reference to PFAS. John said he would forward the MDE link in reference to the PFAS to everyone.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors-January 3, 2023; UME Area Director Candidates-Presentations-January 4, 2023; Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-January 10, 2023; Montgomery Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors-January 12, 2023; Agricultural Advisory Committee-January 17, 2023; Good Agricultural Practices-GAP Certification Training-January 27, 2023; New and Beginning Farmers Training-February 2- April 6, 2023; Taste of Maryland-February 2, 2023; Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis-February 8, 2023; Annual Montgomery Weed Control Board of Directors-February 15, 2023; Annual Agronomy Update-February 22, 2023; 6th Annual Farmers Forum-February 23, 2023; On-Farm Composting Workshop-March 9, 2023

SECRETARY/ TREASURER’S REPORT -The Vice Chairman, Robert Butts, remarked all have received a copy of the minutes and asked if there were any discrepancies or corrections. Having no questions or corrections, a motion was made by Linda Lewis and second by Doug Tregoning and passed approving the Board of Supervisors Minutes for December 9, 2022.

Karen then presented the financial reports and indicated that both the checkbook and bank statement are reconciled. She explained that last month, supervisors received their payouts, and she thanked Linda for signing and returning the necessary documents. She also indicated that the payment was made for the MSCD staff to attend the upcoming Agronomy Update Meeting in February. The only pending financial issue involves making the necessary arrangements to attend the MASCD Winter Meeting. Linda announced she was not available for the meeting and Karen noted the hotel deadline is January 19th. Karen said that she would follow up with everyone no later than January 18th to finalize the attendance for the MASCD Winter Meeting. She also shared MSCD received a \$14,500 donation from the Edward Byrd foundation for support of the Envirothon and other educational programs. She noted that J. has done a great job in securing the funds and he has sent the foundation a thank you letter. Before requesting approval to file the MDA financial report, Karen noted that former Supervisor, Pam Saul, continues to prepare the necessary documentation for the IRS and she would like approval to provide her with some gratuity to say, “Thank You”. John noted that Pam doesn’t charge anything, and we will work out something. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and second by Tim McGrath and passed approving to file the MDA December financial report.

DISTRICT ACTIVITIES REPORT AND PROGRAM UPDATE – Sam Engler then presented the District Activities Report. Sam shared there are 9 completed conservation plans, several conservation plans are in progress and there are 4 Request for Assistance that have been received. The conservation plans will be presented and approved in the Executive Session. He noted to date 79 conservation plans were approved and 79 is an impressive number for a calendar year. Currently, there are no projects under construction, but technicians are working to catch up and prepare for new EQIP applications that have been submitted. Sam said that he is happy to answer any questions on the report and invited John to share any information. John noted he had a conversation with Randy Stabler in reference to repairing a waterway. Randy doesn’t want a design and he has a contractor. John said MSCD will provide E&S guidance for the project and noted MSCD may be able to provide some local cost share. He said there will be some tree clearing but the disturbance will be minimal. Paul is working to provide Randy the criteria for the standards and specification, should Randy decide to use MSCD cost share funds.

Sam then provided NRCS updates and noted the application deadline for EQIP and conservation programs is January 20th. He shared there are 17 applications for Montgomery and the applications are for waste storage, high tunnels, grazing etc. He wasn't sure if it was announced at the last meeting but Dana Rushovich that was the soil conservationist for Howard SCD was selected to fill the vacant state agronomist position. Sam explained that they are still awaiting a formal announcement concerning the new State Conservationist and other positions.

After Sam presented the NRCS updates, John provided information on the 4 requests for assistance and noted two of the RFA's are for equine and that they would be assigned to Travis. John said the other 2 requests involve traditional agriculture and on farm alcohol production and he invited Mike Scheffel to share details. The first RFA that Mike addressed is for Marc Potash. Mike and Jeremy met with Mr. Potash and shared alcohol production is allowable, but it takes a long and slow process. Unfortunately, Mr. Potash moved forward and removed some tree shrubs, and he received a violation of land disturbance from DPS. DPS will dismiss the pending violation if the district agrees to provide technical assistance and work with Mr. Potash. Mr. Potash wants to clean up the farm, replace fence in the existing pastureland and get the land suitable to grow the necessary crops is the first phase. The distillery component of the request would be considered Phase 2, and the District may not be able to provide the assistance required for the size building Mr. Potash is considering. Mr. Potash will likely have to hire an engineer for this phase of the operation. The next RFA is for Dr. Praveen Bolarum and he has purchased 160 acres in Barnesville and he has two plans for the property. First, he wants to develop an incubator type of farming operation where friends and associates can use the farm to grow Indian culturally appropriate food. This would involve installing some deer fencing and irrigation the typical requirements for growing vegetables. The second plan is to have an on-farm brewery. The challenge with the brewery is the location. Dr. Bolarum wants to build the distillery on the wooded parcel. Mike is unsure how Park and Planning will address cutting down the trees, building a brewery and the impervious area for parking. Mike noted that it will be a 3-5-year plan with traditional agriculture first and the on-farm brewery second. Mike told the doctor a yes may be obtained for the project, but it will take a long process and be costly. Jeremy inquired if Kat was the planner assigned to the doctor and noted that ALL communications with the doctor are to be shared with Mike and he suggested that Mike go with Kat on site visits. John remarked that Kat has been assigned to the doctor and she is attending this meeting virtually. Jeremy said it is important not to have communications get crossed wired with Park and Planning and have a situation like another brewery that was fined \$20,000 for forest conservation. The \$20,000 fine resulted in Park and Plannings developing a \$200 fee and formal agriculture exemption process to remove trees. Jeremy noted that both Mr. Potash and the doctor are pushy, and we don't want to rush things. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter. Jeremy noted that after an agriculture exemption to removed trees is achieved the next step is to get a forest harvest permit. John shared MSCD handles the permit process for forest harvest and shared details. Tim asked if on-farm breweries are becoming saturated, and Jeremy responded that currently there are 5 on-farm breweries and 11 total farm alcohol production facilities and there are a couple distillery's in the pipeline. Chris the owner of Lone Oak said there are 40 in Loudoun County, VA. and 30 in Frederick County and that it seemed there was still capacity for these types of operations in Montgomery County. After the discussion, a motion was made by Linda Lewis and second by Tim McGrath and approving the Activities Report.

DISTRICT MANAGERS REPORT: John indicated he would cover some of the more important items in his report but noted the entire report would be incorporated into the minutes.

New Business

PFOS Contamination Poolesville Wells - On Monday, the Office of Agriculture held a meeting at the AHFP concerning reports about PFO's and PFA's contamination in 2 wells used for public water in the town of Poolesville. WUSA covered the story, and some individuals were quoted that farmers may be responsible for the PFA's/PFOs as result of applying the biosolid Bloom on the land. The meeting was intended to facilitate a proactive discussion

among farmers and to strategize the best way to discuss the situation with County elected officials. During the meeting the farm community in attendance expressed concerns about how the information was reported as well as expressing their concerns about the issue as the issue concerning this biosolid is new information to them. It was also expressed that PFA/PFO contamination is a global issue, as PFAs and PFOs are in almost everything plastic and amounts have been detected in rainfall in Antarctica and Tibet. There was discussion during the meeting that out of an abundance of caution, farmers would consider not using these materials until it is better understood what risks are involved. Obviously, farmers have been asked to apply biosolids to land as a way to manage a waste product by turning it into something with a positive benefit. It was not until recently, farmers learned about the PFO's issue with biosolids, and it is concerning to them. Biosolids while containing PFO's, these forever chemicals did not originate from Biosolids. PFO's originate from the formulations in plastic products. Eliminating PFO's in plastics will help to address PFO's in biosolids as well as other sources of contamination (solar panels, roofing materials, plastic containers, rainfall etc.). Farmers want to better understand PFO's and any negative impacts they may have on human health.

Registration Winter MASCD Feb 9 & 10 - As a reminder, MASCD will be held in Annapolis on Feb 9th and 10th and Karen will be making the arrangements. John said due to the MASCD Winter Meeting, he recommended cancelling the February Meeting and meet in March. Everyone agreed with John's recommendation.

Nutrient Management Certification Exam Feb.7 - As an FYI, MDA has announced the next NM certification exam will be at the MDA headquarters. **February 7th, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.** Sign up is required following this link: https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/nutrient_management_training_program.aspx. The application deadline is February 3rd.

MDE Feedback stormwater regulation Update - MASCD has requested District feedback on MDE's proposed stormwater management regulations. The Advancing Stormwater Resiliency Stakeholder Group (A-STorM) is seeking our feedback on two recommendations specifically:

1. Incorporate precipitation data from Atlas 14
2. Increasing the standard for Environmental Site Design from 2.7" to 3.0"

Jen Nelson, MASCD Executive Director, provided additional information and materials from the A-STorM website at <https://sb-227-maryland.hub.arcgis.com/>. (Recordings of the last two meetings might be especially helpful for those who are seeking more information on the rationale behind MDE's recommendations.)

MDE is asking for comments by February 15. With the upcoming Winter Meeting and NACD Meeting, Jen has requested comments back to her no later than February 10 so that she can compile and submit by the deadline. If she doesn't otherwise, she intends to respond that MASCD concurs with MDE's recommendations. John reached out to both Paul and Udeni to see if there was any information or comments, they wished me to provide feedback on the regulation changes or to see if they have any specific concern.

Healthy Soils Competitive Fund Information - The Maryland's Healthy Soils webpage has been updated with information about the competitive fund: https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/Pages/Soil-Health.aspx

Application materials are now also available at the following link:
https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/counties/Fillable_HSPApp_Complete.pdf

We are using our website and social media outlets to promote this program and application process.

Social Media Update - In December, Kira Tregoning announced that she will no longer be able to provide technical support for coordinating our social media outlets. She is having surgery and going on to complete her master's thesis and will not have the time to assist the District in our social media campaigns. Our social media

outlets which include our website, Facebook and twitter are important to our public information and educational outreach efforts, and we need to find another avenue to keep this effort moving forward.

John and Karen have had internal discussions about this need, and we would like to find another person to fill this role. Kathleen Sigwart, who is on our team, would be interested in taking on this role in an afterwork hours paid role. Kathleen has background on editing and developing websites, using both Facebook and twitter and along with her understanding on what we do, would be a perfect match for our needs. Not only would this new outside role be important in helping the District but the additional financial incentive would help us retain a really great employee. John would like the Board to consider bringing on Kathleen in a contractual role as our social media coordinator. We currently have the funds budgeted in our WQPC operating funds. Kathleen would be assuming Kira's role and workload in an afterhours arrangement. The Vice Chair asked if it was the same cost and John responded yes there would be no increase in cost. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and seconded by Tim McGrath and passed approving to contract Kathleen Sigwart to handle the MSCD social media needs.

Taste of Maryland - We received an invitation to attend the Taste of Maryland Agriculture – the signature event of the 2023 Legislative Session - Thursday, February 2, 2023, at Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland at Arundel Mills in Hanover. There some discussion about attending the event and it was later determined to provide a donation. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and second by Tim McGrath to provide a \$100 donation to support the Taste of Maryland event.

Scam Alert- Fraudulent text messages - During the holidays several SCD Board members across the State experienced someone impersonating them asking for gift cards to help them out of a bind. This happened to several Board Chairs (including Robert Butz) where text messages were received by other Board members. When this happened, John immediately contacted MASCD and MDA. Later he learned that this happened to numerous Supervisors across the State. Robert reached out to all our supervisors to let them know about the scam.

Old Business

Envirothon Letter to National Envirothon - In your packets is the letter drafted by Doug, Jeremy, and Robert Butz to the National Envirothon committee to discuss adding an agricultural component to the Envirothon curriculum. The purpose of the letter is to begin a dialog and suggest that the Board is willing to provide substantial financial support to help develop this concept as a part of the program. The Chairman wanted an endorsement from the board to send the letter. Jeremy remarked he thought that was done in the last board meeting. John responded that at the last board meeting, the Board approved paying the Envirothon Annual Dues in the amount of \$1,500. Because the letter suggests the District making a substantial financial contribution to the National Envirothon, the chairman wanted an official board action. Because Doug helped develop the letter, he wanted to recuse himself from voting on the matter. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and seconded by Tim McGrath and passed approving to mail the letter to the National Envirothon.

Final Cover Crop Application Acres 2022-23 - The final totals are in. Fall certified cover crop acres- 33 applications- 12,795.3 acres. Approximately 5,000 acres are expected to be certified as commodity. Not all will qualify for County Commodity Cover Crop as some participants planted more than are eligible for the County Program and some planted commodity acres outside of the county. Additionally, John noted that cover crop numbers are down due to several factors and noted low enrollment will impact achieving the WIP Goals.

Scheduling in person meetings with Legislators - Next week John will begin scheduling meetings with legislators for the Winter MASCD meeting Feb 9th & 10th. Karen is revising the list of legislators that will help me make the necessary contacts. It will be helpful to know who can attend the Winter meeting, so when he is scheduling meetings, he will know he has enough supervisors to cover these meetings.

Engineering Position Update - As reported in December, we only have one applicant for the engineering position. Our second recruitment did not yield any additional candidates. In consultation with the OAG and County OHR, we

have decided to interview this single candidate. The interview will be held on January 20th. Having only one candidate presents its own set of problems. The County will be eyeing unfilled vacant positions that may be cut as part of a budget reduction exercise if the position remains unfilled. As hard as we worked to get this position, that would not be a good outcome. John's thoughts are that if the candidate meets the qualifications for the job, we should perhaps consider selecting them for the position. The person in the position would serve at least 6 months of probation anyway and would give us ample time to evaluate their skill sets. This approach would enable us to have the position filled into the new fiscal year and perhaps preserving the position if this person doesn't work out. Not the best situation to be in but this represents perhaps the best strategy moving forward.

MDA MACS Flat Rate Update Memo - We received written communication from the MAC's office thanking the District for collaborating with the MACS Office over the past year and a half in evaluating and providing feedback regarding proposed revisions to the MACS flat rate schedule.

Over the course of the past two State Soil Conservation Committee meetings, concerns have been raised over the implementation of the new schedule, most notably with certain Best Management Practices.

To aid in addressing those concerns, at the December 15 SSCC meeting, the Department proposed the following:

- Extend the current flat rate structure with the 30% COVID Adjustment until March 31, 2023.
- Reconvene the regional workgroups after January 1 to develop more flexible options within the flat rate schedule and provide a final draft for consideration at the March 2023 SSCC meeting.
- Develop guidance documents and training to facilitate the transition prior to April 1, 2023.

MDA's focus remains on reducing the administrative burden associated with the Program while increasing Best Management Practice implementation to assist Maryland farmers in addressing resource concerns on their land.

ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING

The meeting officially adjourned at 10: 26 a.m. and the next scheduled Board of Supervisors Meeting will be in person with the option to attend virtually on March 10, 2023, at 9:00 am.

Regards

Karen Walker, Administrative Assistant

<u>MEETINGS ATTENDED</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Butz	83%
Butts	92%
McGrath	100%
Linda Lewis	100%
Doug Tregoning	100%
*Linthicum	58%
*Joe Lehman	83%
*Chris Miller	83%

*Associate Member