

DRAFT  
MONTGOMERY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING  
MINUTES  
December 8, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) was held at Ag History Farm Park, 18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, MD Friday, December 8, 2017.

People Present:

Wade Butler, Vice Chair  
Pam Saul, Treasurer  
Robert Stabler, Board Member  
Robert Butts, Board Member  
Tim McGrath, Associate Supervisor  
Tom Linthicum, Associate Supervisor  
Jeremy Criss, Office of Agriculture (OAG)  
Chuck Schuster, Extension  
Kira Tregoning, Maia Media Management  
John Zawitoski, District Manager (MSCD)  
Mike Scheffel, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)  
James Myers, District Conservationist  
Karen Walker, Office Service Coordinator

At 9:06 the Vice Chair, Wade Butler called to order the regular Board of Supervisors Meeting. Wade modified the order on the Agenda and addressed the Social Media Partnership Project that was listed under New Business. John introduced Kira Tregoning and shared what she has been doing with the Office of Agriculture (OAG) to promote agriculture through various social media outlets. After John's introduction, Kira provided a presentation on the approach she utilized for the Office of Agriculture that included statistics and other metrics for the Office's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Several Supervisors are aware of the impact of Social Media and noted that Social Media is a good vehicle for promoting businesses. One important aspect raised was how social media platform as an information communicator can be both measured and monitored. John shared that often we hear that people are not aware of the District and the services we provide. Having a social media presence would be a good way to promote the District and provide a path that will let people know who MSCD is and what we do. Following the Board discussion and understanding the value of social media, Vice Chairman Butler asked if there was a specific request for expanding the District's social media presences. Jeremy Criss explained how the OAG is currently funding the Office's social media outreach and he felt that expanding the social media contract to include the Soil Conservation District as a partner represented an excellent opportunity for the District to have a more effective social media presence. This partnership would include promoting the work that the District performs in helping farmers and county residents, expand our educational outreach through Facebook, Twitter and including a redesign of the District's webpage. While our webpage is functional, it is not the most user friendly. The webpage redesign will help make navigating our webpage for users more accessible and user friendly. It was noted that the proposed funding for social media was listed on the MSCD Cash Statement. The Office of Agriculture has proposed to provide \$10,000 for this effort and Jeremy would like MSCD to provide the same amount. Wade recognizes that

Social Media is the way of the future which received concurrence from other Board members. A motion was made by Robert Stabler and seconded by Pam Saul and passed approving MSCD to provide \$10,000 from the accounts that was listed on the MSCD Cash Statement.

## AGENCY REPORTS

### MDA

Mike provided the report for MDA and mentioned that MDA will convene a Cover Crop focus group to look at ways to improve the Cover Crop Program at the field level. This group will meet on January 9<sup>th</sup> and he indicated that J. Harne of MSCD will be a part of the group. The focus group is to work out the bugs in the Cover Crop software and establish a way to improve the process for field level staff. Mike shared that Montgomery County has fall certified over 15,000 acres in the cover crop program and he noted that statewide the cover crop acres are down. Robert Stabler shared that not having commodity as a part of the cover crop program impacted the number of acres enrolled. Mike shared that J. Harne did a good job in describing the problems that occurred using the SQL Program and noted that electronic signatures was biggest problem. Splitting the fields when concerning separate planting date tiers was the second noted challenge of the SQL program.

### EXTENSION

Chuck provided the report for Extension and shared information on Private Pesticide License. The certificate number is now required when registering for training and you can no longer use the last four digits of the SSN. EPA is calling for a paper reduction and Annual Implementation Report will be transitioning to an electronic filing. The Electronic Annual Implementation Report (EAIR) is replacing the AIR form, but will be phased in over several years. There is a new Nutrient Management Advisor in Frederick and he has a good background in education but he is not certified. Amanda is no longer on detail and the Agronomy winter meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2018 in Urbana.

### OAG

Before Jeremy Criss, presented his report, Tim had a FSA or CREP planting question on 650 New Hampshire Ave. Tim described the happenings and the area and Jim Myers responded saying that it doesn't sound like a CREP Planting. After addressing Tim's question, Jeremy shared information on the status of Dave Weitzer's health. Next Jeremy presented information on items that are listed below.

1. The OAG is continuing to work with Office of Human Resources to complete the reclassifications of all OAG staff- The following reclassifications are complete-John Zawitoski, District Manager MIII, Karen Walker-OSC, Melissa Steed-PAA, Cathy Yingling-AA-II, Jackie Arnold, AA-II. The following reclassifications are still pending-Vacant Farmland Preservation Program Manager-**Please note the County has now implemented a Hiring Freeze**, James Harne and Shelly Ingram Resource Conservationist I, II, III, and Jeremy Criss, Director MII.
2. The ZTA 17-06 Agricultural Zone-TDR Requirements was heard by the Planning Housing and Economic Development-PHED Committee on November 27, 2017. The PHED rejected council staff recommendations in favor of recommendations from the agricultural

community. The only remaining issue is non-conforming use of a pre-1958 dwelling. The PHED committee supported the reconstruction of the dwelling where the tenant does not need to be engaged in the agricultural operation and the size of reconstructed dwelling size can exceed the size of what it is replacing. The OAG was told by the Planning Director that a non-conforming use cannot be expanded and if the agricultural community moves forward the ZTA will be remanded back to the Planning Board again. The OAG responded that the reconstructed dwelling cannot be expanded and it can only be built the same size as what it is replacing. The private covenant can be recorded prior to issuing the building permit and the Farm Labor Housing Units includes [up to 3] mobile homes.

3. The OAG has responded to requests from the Administration to address the revenue short fall of the County. The Office of Agriculture must identify the following:

2% Budget Reduction current fiscal year FY18	\$20,190 + \$7,059=27,249
Motor Pool line item at -\$1,281)	
2% savings in the current fiscal year FY18	\$19,784
4% Budget Reduction for FY19	<u>\$39,665</u>
Total Reductions to OAG-FY18 & FY19	\$86,698
<i>OAG has to cut the budget \$87K.</i>	

4. County Council Bill 23-17 Animal Control-Performance Animal-Violations. The Public Safety Committee scheduled a second Work Session on November 9, 2017. [http://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=14035&meta\\_id=145753](http://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=14035&meta_id=145753) Following the Work Session, the OAG and the Agricultural Center provided a minor language change and requested a follow up meeting. Council member Marc Elrich scheduled a meeting on December 7, 2017 to discuss the language below. Full Council action is scheduled on December 12, 2017. This will be a difficult meeting. Jeremy noted the Marty was trying to protect the interest of the fair. The goal for the fair to have great flexibility and not negatively impact agricultural exhibitions. Jeremy went into details on activities that relate to this bill.

#### **PROPOSED LANGUAGE**

Except for any animal act performed for educational purposes at a Fair or a school, as part of the school curriculum, a person must not financially benefit from the exhibition of a wild animal in a traveling animal act. *Any agricultural activity as defined in the definition of agriculture and farming (Chapter 59) and conducted in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland is explicitly recognized as humane and exempt from any and all provisions of this Chapter.*

5. The Agricultural Advisory Committee submitted a letter dated November 29, 2017 to the County DOT on the Zion Road Bridge replacement. (**See Attached**). The Letter from the AAC was provided in the handout packet. Robert Stabler shared his frustration about the safety of the Bridge on Zion Road. There was a big discussion on this matter and Jeremy suggested to get all the stakeholders together and provide input on the matter to let the County DOT know how this bridge impacts them.

6. The MNCPPC conducted the first Agritourism Study Advisory Committee meeting on November 29, 2017. The study will evaluate the current zoning-land use, building, health codes of the County to see if changes are needed to promote more opportunities of agritourism. Some of the members of the Advisory Committee will probably push back on the types of events and venues that DPS is currently approving.
7. Follow up from the Office of Agriculture tour of three agritourism farms in Loudoun County VA. The DPS has responded back to the OAG they are reinstating the policies for approving agricultural buildings for storing, sorting, processing, and aggregating agricultural products and **NOT** require commercial building permits. Jeremy shared that Ben Butler and Robert Butz need contact him as they begin to move forward with their *agricultural structure*.
8. The Office of Agriculture has partnered with the Maryland Agricultural Resource Based Industry Development Corporation MARBIDCO to create a matching grant program for farmers installing deer fencing. One contract has been approved and three more contracts are pending.

#### **Upcoming Meetings and Events:**

Montgomery Soil Conservation Bd of Supervisors-December 8, 2017 @ 9:00am

Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-December 11, 2017 @ 6:00pm

Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Supervisors-December 12, 2017@7:00pm

Montgomery Co AG RESERVE Alcohol Production Roundtable-Dec 14, 2017@2:00pm

Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee- December 19, 2017 at 7:00 pm.

#### **SECRETARY/ TREASURER'S REPORT**

The minutes of the November 17<sup>th</sup> meeting were received and reviewed and there were no noted changes. A motion was made by Pam Saul and was seconded by Robert Butts and passed approving the November Minutes.

Karen then shared information on MSCD finances. There were no MDA expenses for the month of November and the checkbook and the bank statement match. Karen presented only one invoice and it was for the Envirothon annual dues. MASCD is encouraging Districts to give more than the standard \$500. The option of giving more than the standard donation will provide the District special recognition on T-shirts and Envirothon literature. After discussing the giving options, a motion was made by Pam Saul and seconded by Robert Butts and passed approving the November financial report and to provide the standard \$500 annual Envirothon dues.

#### **APPROVALS, RATIFICATIONS AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE**

The activities report was in the handout packet and Jim noted that he had only two Request for Assistance (RFA) for approval. Tim McGrath noted that the last name for Tracey Pyles was spelled wrong for the conservation plan that Shelly Ingram is working on. A note was made to correct the spelling (Pyles). Jim shared that Montgomery County has 5 EQIP Applications. Two (2) are projects from last year that Brandy has worked on and other three (3) are projects Mel is

providing assistance on. One application is for a High Tunnel. A few applications have been received to use the funding from the Local EQIP Pool. Jim noted that this is the last meeting that he will be attending but he plans to continue to be involved in agriculture. Tim inquired about the roof runoff and dry wells that was listed on the report and Jim provided details on each project. An Ag Chem project was listed on the report and John shared details on that project. Robert Stabler inquired about the earth fill that was listed on the report and John shared information on that project. One for the RFA generated a big discussion about WSSC and dredge material. WSSC is conducting a reservoir Dredge Project and these dredge materials are being hauled away by WSSC paid contractors. These materials have begun to show up on farms and County DPS inspectors have been receiving complaints and these complaints are being referred to the District when the landowner informs DPS that the materials are being brought to the farm for an agricultural use. John noted that the material has not been tested and there is no analysis on the material chemical composition. The person that submitted the RFA is not an ag producer but wants the material to be used for a future agricultural use. Given this material will not be utilized for a year or more, the short-term objective must be to ensure the adequate stabilization of the stockpiled materials. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter and the Board did not feel comfortable with providing assistance now given the actual agricultural use could be more than a year away. The Board felt that the landowner should work with County DPS inspectors through a small land disturbance permit to stabilize the stockpiled dredge material. The landowner could resubmit a request for assistance for the utilization of the dredge earth materials when he has established a more definitive timeline for material use and agricultural project scope. A motion was made Pam Saul and seconded by Robert Stabler and passed approving to activities report and to provide assistance for all RFA, except the RFA involving the WSSC dredged materials.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**OAG/MSCD Social Media Partnership Project-**This item was addressed in the beginning of the meeting and funding was approved.

**BOOTS on the GROUND-** This is the Bay Commission Report on Improving Technical Assistance for Farmers. The entire document was previously sent electronically to the Board of Supervisors. Included in the handout packet were the report's recommendations pages. John went into detail on each recommendation and noted that this report can be used as part of the Montgomery Agriculture Issues for the upcoming MASCD Legislative Winter Meeting to help validate what Districts have been discussing with legislators for many years. Within this report, the Bay Commission's Chairman, State Representative Garth Everett (R-PA), stated that "With the overwhelming amount of reliance on agriculture to help clean up the Bay, there simply aren't enough 'boots on the ground' to provide the help needed to farmers to get the job done." Through the release of the report, the Commission and its partners are bringing attention to the importance of adequate and dedicated funding for local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to support the strong farmer/district partnership. This is the same message that Chairman Butz has been conveying to Local, State and Federal agencies and legislators. John indicated that he would like to incorporate the message from the Bay Commission's report into the MSCD 2018 Agricultural Issues document for the Winter Meeting Legislator Packet. Karen provided the 2017 fact sheet describing agricultural issues fact sheet in

the handout packet. John informed the Board that he would revise the 2017 agricultural issues document and have it available for the Board to review at the January meeting.

**WSSC Watershed Dredging Project**-This item was discussed with the RFA. Pam googled the farm name “Sunshine Farm LLC” and it has a Florida address. John shared details of his discussion with person requesting assistance.

**NRCS/MASCD Grant Agreement Amendment** – The amendment provides the ability for the District to receive financial reimbursement from NCRS for certain eligible items that the District staff provides assistance. Work performed by Federal Staff is not eligible. John explained that the District was seeking minimal funding under this amendment because the rules for how the District can seek reimbursement have changed significantly. John recommended the Board to approve the agreement and a motion was made by Pam Saul and seconded by Robert Stabler and passed approving MSCD to sign off on the NRCS/MASCD Grant Agreement.

**NRCS National Vehicle Reduction Strategy**- Dr. Hillsman’s sent an email to conservation partners and informed us that as a part of the ongoing USDA restructuring. NRCS has committed to a fleet reduction strategy that requires NRCS to reduce the size of its fleet nationally, by 1,000 vehicles before the end of this calendar year. The resulting impact to Maryland NRCS’ fleet is a reduction of 8 vehicles. Staff utilizing these vehicles have been asked to make efficient use of assigned vehicles and further reductions in vehicles could be forthcoming. The District (NRCS-Federal Vehicle) has a green Chevy pickup that has been out of service for years and should be one of the 8 vehicles to be reduced.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Solicitation for acting DC Advertised**- December 6, 2017 was the closing date to apply for this position. This will be a temporary assignment for a period of up to 120 days. During our November meeting, Rob McAfee indicated that he would like to explore a plan B. The District does not know what a Plan B might entail, however, this Plan B approach should be explored now. John suggested the District should send a letter to Rob McAfee thanking him for attending our November meeting and suggest now is the appropriate time to begin dialog on his suggestion of developing a plan B approach. Given this is likely to continue as a shared position between Montgomery and Howard, the letter should indicate that any discussion of a Plan B should involve both Howard and Montgomery SCD’s being at the table.

**Last Day for EQIP Applications: Dec 15<sup>th</sup>** -Just a reminder that if you are interested in signing up for EQIP.

**Cover Crop/MACS Update** - Cover Crop Spot checks have been completed and MSCD should have everything completed by the MDA December 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. MDA is requesting feedback from field staff on improving the delivery of cover crop program by January 8<sup>th</sup> as indicated in Mike’s MDA report, District staff have already provided this feedback to MDA. - MACS Capital Project Status Reviews: These are due by January 15<sup>th</sup> and MSCD staff has been working on getting these reviews completed.

**Advertisements for CBTF – Tech Positon.** – The position description has been finalized. The District is going to take advantage of as much free advertising as we can, but will need approval of the Board to place the announcement to run in the Frederick Post. Karen shared that NRCS has advertised a position on Indeed and she will research how this position can be advertised using Indeed. In the last meeting Farmlink was another avenue to advertise the position. A motion was made by Robert Stabler and seconded by Robert Butts and passed approving the funds to have the position advertised in the Frederick Post.

### **CHAIR REPORT**

Wade had nothing share with the Board; however, Pam shared information from the Department of Transportation requiring electronic log of hours. Pam noted that when a truck pulls in for a horse show, although the driver may be sitting idle, the hours are supposed to be logged as driving hours. This situation leads to less hours a driver can actually be on the road driving. Time spent sitting idle should not be counted as a part of the drive time. There was a big discussion on this matter. Tom noted that horses and cattle should be handled differently. The driving log should not be one size fits all. It was noted this information was provided to better understand how drive hours are required to be logged and will likely create bigger challenges for drivers hauling livestock.

### **ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING**

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 and the next scheduled meeting will be held on January 12<sup>th</sup> at the Ag History Farm Park.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Walker, Office Service Coordinator

<b><u>MEETINGS ATTENDED</u></b>	<b><u>PERCENTAGE</u></b>
Butz	92%
Butler	100%
Saul	67%
Stabler	83%
Butts	75%
*McGrath	92%
*Linthicum	92%

\*Associate Members