

MONTGOMERY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
May 14, 2021

Approved
6-11-21

Due to COVID-19, the AHFP remains closed to the public, therefore the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) was held remotely on the GoToMeeting virtual platform.

People Present:

Robert Butz, Chair
Robert Butts, Vice Chair
Tim McGrath, Treasurer
Linda Lewis, Supervisor
Doug Tregoning, Supervisor
Tom Linthicum, Associate Supervisor
Joe Lehman, Associate Supervisor
Chris Miller, Associate Supervisor
Jeremy Criss, Director OAG
Mike Scheffel, OAG
Adam Lyon, MDA
Charlotte Brewster, District Conservationist (NRCS)
John Zawitoski, District Manager (MSCD)
James Harné, Conservation Planner (MSCD)
Kathleen Herr, Conservation Planner (MDA/MSCD)
Travis Gorleski, Equine Planner, (MSCD)
Karen Walker, Office Service Coordinator (MSCD)

Vice Chair, Robert Butts called the meeting to order at 9:02 am, Chairman Butz would join the meeting a few minutes later. Adam Lyon, MDA Area Coordinator was called upon to present the report for MDA.

Agency Reports:

Maryland Department of Agriculture: Adam Lyon, Patuxent Regional Coordinator for MDA, reviewed with the Board changes in the CDC guidelines that will be impacting Department (MDA) operations. As of today's meeting, the current office entry protocols remain and are unchanged. Adam explained that MDA is working with the CDC and the governor's recommendations for office reentry. He announced that effective, July 1, 2021, State staff will be transitioning back to full time in office work. Local SCD operational rules will apply if they are more stringent. Adam and John are scheduled to meet and discuss the best course of action for office reentry for State staff. John inquired if a telework option would be available to State staff as a part of the July 1st office reentry requirement.

Adam shared that the pandemic has forced the reexamination of office work options and noted that teleworking has demonstrated benefits. MDA feels that those staffers that have demonstrated proven productivity during the pandemic will have opportunities to pursue hybrid telework option. MDA is trying to be flexible by extending the opportunity to telework to these employees. Especially, for employees that are doing projects that involve computer work (designs and plans). Telework provides a viable option. Adam indicated that telework option will be determined on a case by case basis but primarily will be opened to only for a select few staff that have been productive during the pandemic. He also noted that no one will have the option to telework full time. Most of the work hours will be in office. Adam shared that when a staff teleworks, field visits are expected, and it will be very closely monitored and will require a daily work report.

Adam welcomed Kathleen Herr, as the new planner for MSCD and mentioned that she is taking advantage of all trainings and webinars that are available to her. Adam thanked John, Charlotte and the MSCD staff for welcoming Kathleen and coordinating link pass, computer, and other necessities. Adam noted having Kathleen on board will help meet the WIP goals. An MDA Technician, Broderick Pascual, was hired for Charles County and Jill Pyle is the New BMP verifier for

the Watershed Implementation Program. Although there are some new hires, MDA is working to post another recruitment round state-wide to fill the gaps left by the last recruitment. There were 3 employment offers for Montgomery SCD and only 1 accepted (Kathleen Herr). Included in this recruitment effort is a Regional Technician position for the Patuxent region. Adam noted that all Districts have a considerable workload and it would be more efficient to have a Regional Technician to only focus on projects that will address WIP. This effort would require Adam to work closely with District Managers and District Conservationist in identifying the projects on the horizon for the Regional Technician to review. Adam noted that NRCS has regional positions and this position would be a good piece to the puzzle to address workload and WIP goals. John asked if any of the positions could be assigned for an engineer and asked if MDA has a classification for an engineering position. Adam responded that the position is a technician position that does engineering work but not a professional engineer. MDA does not currently have a classification for a professional engineering position. While it was recognized that having a regional technician would be beneficial, what is really needed are more professional engineers.

John commented that he has learned that there is a considerable amount of technical assistance that the NRCS Professional Engineer provides for pond reviews to all SCDs and noted that effective January 2022, NRCS will no longer be providing this assistance. Adam noted MDA is focusing on projects that help meet the WIP goals and that ponds do not provide any WIP credit. Adam suggested since MASCD sent out the memo, that this matter could be addressed at the MASCD August meeting, if not before. The chairman Robert Butz shared John's same concern and frustration. There is a need to have an engineer on board and Robert does not believe MASCD will be in a position to effectuate a solution to this engineering problem.

John suggested setting up a meeting with Adam and the OAG and have a discussion on how the state and the county can provide funding for a professional engineering position. Jeremy shared that John has done an excellent job with the WQPC funding from DEP and he would like to meet with Adam Ortiz and have a discussion on additional funding for the engineering position. It was noted that the bar needs to be raised to hire an engineer and John will set up a meeting with OAG and MDA to get the discussion rolling.

Adam then addressed the MACS updates and shared the governor has signed SB 344. This legislation allows MDA to provide up to 100% state funding assistance. The current cost share assistance limit is 87.5%. Best Management Practices for this funding level is being identified now. MDA is focused on achieving WIP goals and the increase in cost share will target BMP's that are low per unit cost to implement but provide a high per unit reduction. Land retirement, tree plantings and conservation cover provide a high credit reduction for very few dollars. Adam doubts that Waste Storage Structures will be on the list. The law goes into effect on July 1, 2021. John asked if the 100% cost share assistance was available for rented land. Adam responded that the funding is for the practice and the distinction of lease verse owner is not a factor. However, this does not apply to the cost share assistance that MDA announced for the installation of satellite storage facilities. To receive this funding, you must be the landowner. Doug Tregoning inquired about what happens when the State pays for a BMP and the land transfers either by sale or to a new operator. What is required? Adam responded that the new owner or operator would be required to maintain the practice. John added there is documentation required by MDA that in essence transfers the responsibility for maintaining the BMP to the new owner/operator. If they aren't willing to maintain the BMP, MDA will calculate the reimbursement amount which is paid back to the program. Doug noted that practice is similar with CREP and other federal programs.

Adam then shared MDA's announcement that cost share rates for Poultry Manure Transport has increased to \$28 per ton for qualifying farms. Adam noted that he previously mentioned the cost share assistance for installation of satellite storage facilities and to receive this funding you must be the landowner. Adam mentioned that the MDA Regional Meeting will be held on June 9 and 10 via Google meets. This concluded Adam's report.

Chairman, Robert Butz apologized for joining the meeting late as he was experiencing some computer issues. Moving forward on the agenda, Chuck Schuster was invited to provide the report for Extension.

EXTENSION: Chuck greeted the board and noted Extension and the University in general are working towards opening offices in counties where it is allowed. Currently, in some counties there are offices open to the staff and for the public to

come in. However, there are still other counties where the offices remain closed. Presently, the AHFP is closed. Chuck shared for the University of Maryland; the local health department makes the decision on office reentry.

In a conversation with the Dean, Chuck has learned that the Dean is interested in helping Extension rebuild from the damage from the past year. Chuck noted that 4-H has received a lot of push back and there is some program concern. He mentioned that in the ag sector, the Nutrient Management Advisors are doing a stellar job. He is working with all three advisors in the cluster and each one is meeting with farmers and writing plans. Chuck believes there is no backlog for the region and recognized there is no back log in Montgomery. All the advisors have done a phenomenal job and the advisor for Montgomery County, Natalia Salazar has gone outside of the region and written plans. Chuck wanted the Board to be aware of Extension's general events and provided a reminder to be mindful of pesticide usage right now. With most of the public still being at home during the planting season and increased questions concerning pesticides and farming activities. The use of social media has impacted the pesticide awareness, and this led to a lengthy discussion. Before Chuck closed out on his report, Doug asked about the status of the Ag position in Frederick County. Chuck shared that an announcement should be made soon to replace the position that Kelly Nichols previously held. Jeremy explained that the position that Matt Morris previously held in Frederick County is frozen because it is funded by the state. It was noted that not filling this position will negatively impact Kelly Nichols, the Montgomery Extension Agent. There was an extensive dialogue on this matter, and it was noted there is a critical need to have both of these Frederick County positions filled. Since the position announcement is scheduled to be made soon, the chairman, Robert Butz asked Chuck to provide the position update to the Board Supervisors.

Office of Agriculture: Jeremy Criss, Director of Montgomery County's Office of Agriculture presented his report and announced that the County Executive has been and continues to monitor COVID-19 and this has resulted in a slower opening than other parts of the State. However, he believes the pressure to open Montgomery County facilities is mounting and at a minimum County Leaders will be more present in county facilities. It appears that the County Council and the County Executive are at odds/disagreement on when to open. He explained that the County will be looking at continuation of telework alternatives as the County moves into the transition back to office. These telework alternatives will be evaluated on an office by office basis. In addition, Jeremy noted that the Director of General Services has noted there will be a smaller County footprint in agencies and facilities.

Jeremy then addressed the challenges that the OAG is facing with DEP regarding the proposed septic tank pumping legislation. OAG has received a copy of the legislation and if the language in the legislation is not changed, it will be hard for the agriculture community to support the bill. Jeremy has shared that changes need to be made on lines 158 to 170. There is troubling language in the legislation that provides the County wide authority for mandating corrective measures for septic tanks that are failing. Jeremy has spoken with the director Adam Ortiz and Adam is going to meet with the staff on the matter. John remarked that in the meeting with DEP, it was questioned whether corrective measures for failed septic tanks were being considered as part of the proposed regulation. DEP responded that the changes were to bring about more aggressive maintenance of septic systems not mandating corrective measures. Tim commented that the state of Maryland already requires that septic tanks meet requirements or is upgraded before a property is sold. Tim believes there is grant funding available to make the septic correction. Jeremy will continue watching this legislation before it goes to the County Council. Next, he reported on the items below.

Jeremy then explained that The County Council Introduced Bill 16-21-Environmental Sustainability – Building Energy Use Benchmarking and Performance Standards – Amendments to Chapter 18 Environmental Sustainability. The OAG staff met with DEP staff on April 8, 2021 to determine whether this bill will negatively impact agricultural buildings. The Office of Agriculture will recommend that existing and new agricultural buildings be added to Section 18A-38B Applicability and exempt from the bill. There is a public hearing scheduled on June 15, 2021 and the agricultural organizations should provide a letter outlining that all existing and new agricultural buildings should be exempt from this Bill 16-21. [2707 1 14390 Bill 16-2021 Introduction 20210504.pdf](#)

Jeremy then shared information about another DEP initiative to proposed regulations that would first ban sale of gas-powered lawnmowers and then later ban their use. Both Jeremy and Mike are concerned because there is an application for commercial businesses and Jeremy doesn't think DEP understands the costs associated of electric tools/equipment powered by batteries included replacement batteries. Chuck shared his insight and noted the electric

power lawnmowers are twice the cost of a gas mowers and there is continued ongoing costs. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter. Jeremy will keep the Board informed as this DEP initiative moves forward.

Jeremy informed the Board of a meeting that was held on Thursday May 6, 2021 for River Road residents that own property along the gravel portion of the road. Representatives from the CEX, DOT, OAG, and Rustic Roads Advisory Committee attended this meeting. A new survey-study has been done to replace drainage pipes and clean out drainage ditches along this portion of River Road. This meeting is a follow up to the August 21, 2018 meeting that Linda Lewis hosted at her farm market that 19 River Road residents attended. DOT plans to maintain the surface through continued grading, and filling potholes and to installing 6 new culverts that have been needed for some time. The County Executive's Special Assistant, Dale Tibbitts, noted that the County Executive is opposed to having the road paved. The meeting was well attended and there was a lengthy discussion on this matter. The Chair, Robert Butz, asked Linda if she and her neighbors have considered a class action against the County. Linda responded that they have contacted a lawyer to discuss this issue. However, she did note the matter is both an environmental and health issue and the matter is going to be elevated to a higher level to get resolution.

Jeremy next provided a follow up from the May 10, 2021 County Council Work Session on the Office of Agriculture FY22 Operating Budget. The Council recommended to restore the Maryland Matching Money-MMM program that expands the purchasing power of customers at our farmers markets; The Departments of Finance and OMB need to develop a way to address how the Matching Grant Cost Share program reimbursements from MARBIDCO uses the OAG appropriation and when MARBIDCO reimbursements are deposited into the General Fund, this funding does not come back to the OAG; And to explore a new FTE full time position assigned to the OAG to be discussed during the summer. Jeremy explained how MARBIDCO funding works and OAG is looking for alternative ways to use MARBIDCO funding. Jeremy shared that a call is scheduled today with Steve McHenry of MARBIDCO. Jeremy explained that he wants to obtain funding to replace the vacant part-time administrative position that was held by Melissa Steed and to use this funding to establish a new professional level OAG FTE position. Paperwork has already been submitted to Human Resources reclassifying the position to a professional position. The new professional position will have the capacity to handle the farm alcohol production and other agriculture initiatives that are forthcoming.

Jeremy then led the discussion on Leaf-gro that is provided by Maryland Environmental Service (MES) that many farmers use annually as a soil amendment. The Maryland Department of Agriculture removed Leaf-gro from their approved list of organic soil amendments for organic certification because of the ink in the bags that are provided to residents for gathering leaves and grass clippings. In accordance with an agreement between the County Government and the Sugarloaf Citizens Association, the MES can only provide Leaf-gro to be delivered in 40-yard tractor trailer trucks that small scale farms cannot accommodate. Jeremy provided an ink bag sample from Prince Georges organic facility and shared that DEP staff has collected data and for every 60 tons of material, there is 80 pounds of ink. Tom asked if it was possible for Leaf-gro to use renewable soy ink and Jeremy responded there is a discussion about using soy ink and it was noted the soy ink does not hold up as well.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

Montgomery Soil Conservation District-May 14, 2021 9:00 am
Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-May 18, 2021
Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors- June 1, 2021 7:00 pm
Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-June 8, 2021 7:00 pm

SECRETARY/ TREASURER'S REPORT

Chairman Butz noted that all Supervisors have received the minutes and asked if there was any questions or additions to the April 9, 2021 Board Minutes. With no additions or corrections to the minutes, a motion was made by Tim McGrath and then second by Linda Lewis and passed approving the April 9th Board minutes.

Karen then presented the April financial report. Karen indicated that both the checkbook and bank statement have been reconciled and noted that there is only one expense for the renewal of the Bay Journal and the cost is \$25. She noted that

funds are available for this expense and additionally she shared that funding is available for all to attend the upcoming 2021 MASCD Summer Meeting. Karen recommended that the Board approve the expense for the Bay Journal and to file the MDA financial report. Karen asked John to present another financial matter to the Board. John was happy to report that the Montgomery County Envirothon team won 1st place in this year's State Envirothon Competition. John mentioned that this was a remarkable achievement and shared the details on the program. There were two teams from Richard Montgomery High School that participated and the team that won first place will represent the State at the National Envirothon competition in June. John noted our second county team placed 5th. John suggested that the District should recognize the team for doing so incredibly well in the competition and would like the Board's support to congratulate the winning team and provide a \$300 scholarship for each team member. John stated that since the Edward Byrd Foundation has provided substantial funding to our program, the District could consider establishing an annual scholarship for Envirothon participants. John noted that he would work out the mechanics on establishing the annual scholarship. Doug asked if the scholarship was for college and this led to a lengthy discussion. After the discussion, it was decided to provide the students a grant cash payment and recognize the Edward Byrd foundation as the benefactor for the grant award. The Chairman requested staff work up a statement of parameters for providing this grant award to students, so that the Board has a consistent approach for recognitions of this type.

After the discussion on the Envirothon Grant to this Year's Winning Team, the Chairman noted that while the Board is appreciative of the staff keeping the Board apprised on all expenditures needing approval, the Chairman would like the Board to consider a blanket approval for expenses under a certain amount. This approach was amiable to the entire Board to grant administrative latitude to make transactions under a certain dollar amount without Board approval. John agreed with Robert and noted that we can establish an amount that the Board is comfortable to delegate to staff and have the action memorized in the Board minutes. The Chairman asked Karen if \$250 is enough for a possible string of expenses. Karen responded that \$250 is more than enough. John said that a motion can be made to authorize administrative staff to address expenditures under \$250 without the Board's approval. All agreed and a motion was made by Doug Tregoning and second by Tim McGrath and passed approving the administrative staff to address expenditures under \$250 without Board action. Upon the motion, the chairman noted that there is no board action for the Bay Journal expense, and we need a motion to address the filing of the financial reports. A motion was made by Robert Butts and seconded by Doug Tregoning and passed approving to file the April Financial report.

District Activities Report and Program Updates

Charlotte Brewster, the District Conservationist presented an update on NRCS Agency information and explained that NRCS will be conducting interviews to hire Program Support Specialist to assist the Montgomery and Howard Offices. The Program Support Specialist position is basically an administrative position to help with federal contracts, record keeping, payments, filing uploading and tracking information. Charlotte shared that NRCS hasn't provided her any administrative support and that this position will fill a need and allow her more time for conservation work. The contractual position is funded by RC&D and will be for 3 counties. She knows the position will support Montgomery and Howard, but she was not for certain if the third county was Anne Arundel or Prince George's.

Charlotte then updated Supervisors on the status of NRCS contracts and indicated that currently NRCS has \$72,732 obligated for Montgomery County. \$61K is for EQIP and the remaining \$11,500 is for agriculture management assistance for High Tunnels. MSCD had received several applications for the local workgroup funding and 2 of the applications were for High Tunnels and she had them funded through AMA. In reference to contract preapprovals, for Montgomery County alone there is \$151K that needs to be worked through and have contracts written. We have numerous applicants that are committed with only one applicant who has backed out. The operator backed out of a \$65,000 contract do purely to cost. The cost to implement the waste storage was 2 to 3 times higher than the cost share amount available and the practice would have created a financial hardship for the operation. The applicant can reapply at another time. If all goes well, NRCS is looking to have \$200K obligated for Montgomery County. If there were no questions, Charlotte wanted to move on with the Requests for Assistance.

The 1st RFA presented was for James Sizemore. The operator has a small parcel in Damascus and wants to build an agriculture structure. Currently, there is no agriculture being conducted on the property. MSCD is working with OAG on this matter and OAG has endorsed this project based on the landowner's agricultural business plan. Tim asked if there were any covenants and he questioned the setback requirements. John shared that there are no covenants prohibiting

agriculture and there is plenty of room to meet the setback requirements. Jeremy shared that the property is not agriculture accessed. James is a veteran and because of his military service he applied for Montgomery County property tax exempt status. In the discussion it was mentioned that James is associated with the owner of East Rivendell Farm, Sharon Fraley and they will be working together. John mentioned MSCD has received several requests for assistance for agriculture buildings and have learned later the building usage was not being used for agriculture. The OAG is assisting the MSCD with vetting each request to make sure structures that we are providing assistance for are being used for bona fide agricultural uses. John does not want to overload DPS with ag structure Stormwater Management reviews which may threaten the ability for DPS to waiving the \$3000 for the permit fee for SWM. John recommended that we help Mr. Sizemore and as part of our assistance, a Conservation Plan will be developed that will address E&S requirements and bring the operation into compliance with the law.

Alex Bobbitt was the next RFA presented. Alex owns an equine operation that is about 30 acres and he wants to install remote watering facilities and stream crossing. Alex has about 20 horses and produces hay and he is looking into installing several reportable BMPs (Grazing Management, Cropland Management, Stream Corridor, Waste Management and Nutrient Management) that would be incorporated into his Conservation Plan. John recommended that MSCD provide assistance for Mr. Bobbitt.

Tim Johnson another equine operation that would like assistance from MSCD. His operation is in Clarksburg and he has about 26 animal units. He is interested in getting help with pasture management, Ag Waste and Nutrient Management. John recommended that MSCD provide assistance for this operator.

The RFA for Jennifer Lewis generated a great deal of discussion. Jennifer is board Supervisor Linda Lewis's daughter-in-law and Linda shared information and suggested that she recuse herself from the matter. The Chairman, Robert Butz commented that he is appreciative of Linda being on the Board and providing local knowledge that helps determine the proper course of action. Robert wants all the Supervisors to feel free in providing local information and he understands and agrees with Linda in recusing herself when it comes to voting on the matter. Charlotte is also appreciative of the local knowledge that is provided.

The last two RFA's presented were for Manolo Gomez and Joost Voorthuis. Manolo Gomez recently purchased property for a start up for a winery off Price Distillery Road. Mr. Gomez needs an access road to establish the vineyard and will need a small agriculture structure for his operation. He wants to work with the District and get an approved Conservation Plan. Joost Voorthuis has an equine operations and Bobby Jamison referred Mr. Voorthuis to work with MSCD. Mr. Voorthuis wants to install an outdoor Heavy Use Area and get an approved conservation plan. After all the RFA's were presented the chairman, noted that RFA's do not require a vote or the Boards approval and suggested to move forward with the meeting. The District Activities Report was then discussed briefly as all Supervisors were provided this report prior to the meeting. Having no questions about the District Activities Report, New and Old Business Items were presented.

New Business:

Update on Supervisor Appointments – John thanked all the applicants for applying and noted that Linda Lewis was appointed by the County Executive and Doug Tregoning Board appointment is for Extension. Both have completed their Oath of Office. John shared that MSCD can assist Robert Butz in taking his Oath of Office and Robert requested that John provide him the contact information and that he would take care of the matter. John shared that normally the Board of Supervisors has an annual election for officers. Currently, Robert Butz is the Chair, Robert Butts is the Vice Chair and Tim McGrath is the Treasurer. Because the 2 newly appointed Supervisors have little time on the Board, and we are halfway through the calendar year, it is John's recommendation that the current slate of officers remain the same and wait until next year to hold official elections. Doug commented that the officers should remain the same. A motion was made by Doug Tregoning and seconded by Tim McGrath that the current officers remain the same Robert Butz, Chair, Robert Butts, Vice Chair and Tim McGrath as the Treasurer.

Update on New Hire- John shared that Kathleen Herr is the new MDA planner on board with MSCD. John provided introduction and background on all the supervisors and granted Kathleen to share information about herself to the Board members. The chairman noted that it is great to have the resources on board and said welcome.

October Board Meeting Conflict/Virtual meeting proposal- This request came from Doug Tregoning our new Board Supervisor. John explained that last year's Close Encounters with Agriculture (CEWA) was held virtually. Doug explained that it is likely this year's program will be in person and he has set up dates for the 2021 CEWA program that is hosted at the AHFP. Normally for this meeting, the Board has met offsite due to unavailable space in the building. John shared that once we are back to in person meetings, that he would like to maintain the virtual platform as an option for Supervisors to participate. This would allow the Board to consider holding a virtual Board meeting in October instead of trying to find a location off site. This accommodation would allow Doug to participate in both the meeting and his CEWA program. John noted that other Districts are maintaining the virtual platform along with in person meetings. Doug commented that the virtual meeting option will help with meeting attendance and noted that certain times of the year a farmer would prefer virtual meetings. There were several comments about the value of having a virtual meeting and a motion was made by Doug Tregoning and second by Tim McGrath that the October Board of Supervisors meeting will be held virtually and moving forward there will be the option to attend the Board of Supervisors meeting virtually. After the motion, Robert Butz commented virtual meetings are great, but nothing compares to in person meetings but agrees some hybrid model would make sense.

MCFB Farmside Chat Series with Legislators – John shared that the Farm Bureau has reached out to the Office of Agriculture, Extension, and Montgomery County producers to discuss the concept idea of inviting the legislators for monthly discussions to address items that impact agriculture. The idea is to extend our reach beyond webinars and the annual legislative luncheon. The chats will have a targeted audience and the suggested areas for discussion involve Ag Reserve Solar, Donation Food and Food Insecurity, Livestock Processing, Deer Damage and Forest Banking. John noted that the Farm Bureau may need some type of assistance and would look at the District as a potential funding partner. Jeremy shared information on how the chat series evolved and noted that the General Assembly wanted to meet with smaller farm groups and contacted Paula Linthicum. Jeremy mentioned that it is a partnership with the Montgomery County Farm Bureau and the State Farm Bureau. Jeremy noted farms have already been selected. The first meeting will be in June and it will be held at Butlers Orchard to address food resiliency; July meeting will have guest speakers from MARBIDCO and MDA because there is no meat processing farm in Montgomery County. However, it was later established that the livestock meat processing will be held at Seneca Ayr. John and Bobby Jamison farm will address Deer Damage; Billy Willards farm will address Forest Banking. Jeremy noted that several farms in the Ag Reserve have solar and will be visited and noted Rock Hill Orchard is a good example of accessory solar. Again, Jeremy noted that they are trying to keep the group small and are asking ag agency staff to attend to provide discussion support.

MACS Letter Regarding BMP Cost –St. Mary SCD has invited all Districts to request MACS to consider some type of program modification to address rising construction material costs so that BMPs can be installed, and projects not cancelled. John noted that the rising material costs is preventing the installation of BMP's. John mentioned that MDA does have a process in place to address the rising material costs for flat rates but that is a long process and not responsive enough to rapidly rising costs. To address the budgetary and programmatic issues, John suggested that MDA have the governor apply for and receive federal assistance from the American Rescue Plan. This program can be tapped to provide funding for businesses impacted by COVID-19. These rising costs are directly correlated to COVID-19. John drafted a letter to MDA and the letter included information on the American Rescue Program and was in the Supervisor handout packet. John asked for input on the letter and Robert Butz remarked that he is appreciative of John's ability to recommend alternatives over just writing to complain about an issue. The American Rescue Plan is potentially a way to help farmers. Associate Tom Linthicum is in support of what John is trying to do and shared his experience on the rising cost to install his waterway that is listed on the District Activities Report. All agreed the material cost are rising and a motion was made by Robert Butts and second by Doug Tregoning and passed approving to submit the MACS letter.

FY22 General Fund and CB Trust Agreements - Normally by May we have the MDA worksheets to prepare and submit to the Department for consideration. John explained the process and asked Adam the status of the budget for FY22. Adam responded that the District Operations Program Manager, Byron Petrauskas, is working with the Area Coordinators on this matter now and that we should receive something well before July 1st. After commenting on the

budget matter, Adam asked to loop back to MACS and flat rates. Adam wants to keep in communication with folks that are on the fence about installation of BMPs due to the high material costs. Adam noted that throughout the region, operators are putting off BMP implementations. If you know of anyone on the fence, please shoot him an email so he can put them on the list for Jason and help guide the process.

Discussion of Post COVID -19 Operations- This was the last item that John presented and noted that as more people become vaccinated, we will begin to emerge out of a lock down situation and return to some level of normalcy. John is really proud of the staff and how we have been able to get things done for our cooperators. These were difficult times, but everyone worked very hard to maintain our operations and provide continuity of services. Conservation Planning wise, we had a net increase in plan acres totally almost 38% with over 5,100 acres planned this last year. We also saw a significant increase in request for assistance leading to increases getting conservation and BMPs on the ground. This wasn't easy but we all worked hard at keeping things moving along. I think one important lesson we learned through this process that even in a telework environment, we managed to maintain and, in some cases, expand productivity.

Both the State and County leaderships have seen this and will be looking at avenues to maintain a hybrid work environment for staff following the pandemic. John indicated that he is not sure what the federal partners will be doing, but it his understanding they are considering similar approaches. Over the next month, he will be participating with our partners to formalize what this hybrid working situation will look like. The timing of this couldn't be better really, with additional staff coming on and limited office space, it provides the opportunity to consider desk sharing alternatives. This will take some coordination with schedules, but he believes this offers the District a way to accommodate additional staff while maintaining productivity. After John shared information on how good the staff have operated during the pandemic, Adam asked the Chairman if he could address the Board. Adam wanted to officially recognize Paul Meyer and his work during the pandemic. Adam believes that Paul has done more field work than anybody in the State and he has kept good communication. John mentioned that Paul has been great and besides the field work, he provides one-on-one training for the RC&D technician.

New Business Informational Items-John shared that the Supervisors have received the complete report, but he wanted to highlight on a couple items from the report listed below.

MASCD Summer Meeting: The dates have been set for August 1, 2, and 3. Location Hyatt Cambridge. We have received the registration packet and Karen will be reaching out to each of you to discuss attendance for the annual meeting and accommodation and meal details.

Cooperators Dinner: We are awaiting additional guidance from the County for changes to outdoor restrictions on large gatherings. We have secured a location and proposed dates for the event. Butler's Orchard has graciously agreed to host us and the dates we have set aside to hold are September 15th and 16th. We should probably make a final decision on the dinner event by the June meeting. Depending on the restrictions, we may have to limit attendance. John wants to recognize MSCD 75th Anniversary during this event.

Annual Report: Our MASCD Annual Report has been published to our District Website: You can access this report by following the link below:

<https://www.montgomeryscd.org/publications?lightbox=dataItem-koaepfhz>

This report will be published a second time in our June Newsletter that we are currently working on.

Old Business Information Items

MASCD Awards - On May 6th, the District submitted 5 award submissions to MASCD for the 2020 District Awards. This is always quite a bit of work, but we pulled together and got the submissions submitted in advance of the May 7th deadline. The five awards we submitted included: MidAtlantic Farm Credit (MAFC) Outstanding District Award,

Conservation Education District of the Year, District Attendance Award, District Cooperator of the Year, and the Newsletter Award. John noted the submittals were done before the deadline.

Update on WSSC – Seneca Dredge Project – John said that this item was not on the report, but he wanted to provide an update. On May 5th, John coordinated a meeting with WSSC, MDA, MDE involving what approvals would be needed to use dredged materials on agricultural land. MDE has concerns on the initial analysis and methodology of collection. They will require additional sampling; it is a function of the amount of materials being dredged. They are now estimating the amount of material is going to be between 125,000 cubic yards and 150,000. We discussed what WSSC would need to do and the approvals from MDA and the State Chemist to classify the materials for use as a soil amendment. This could take over a year for MDA to approve the use of the materials.

If MDA qualifies the material as being appropriate as a soil amendment, the producers NM plan would need to be revised before any materials could be applied to cropland. If MDA qualifies the material as being appropriate as a soil amendment, then the District could provide erosion and sediment control through the Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan as an agricultural practice. If MDA cannot qualify the material as a soil amendment, then material could not be applied as an agricultural practice. We would then have to evaluate the project to see if the material could be applied to a conservation practice in accordance with the field office tech guide and our fill policy.

Chairman Correspondence: Robert Butz, the chairman noted that he has no correspondence to share.

ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING

The meeting officially adjourned at 10:20 and the next scheduled Board of Supervisors Meeting is June 11, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Walker, Administrative Assistant

<u>MEETINGS ATTENDED</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Butz	92%
Butts	92%
McGrath	100%
Linda Lewis	100%
*Linthicum	92%
*Joe Lehman	58%
*Chris Miller	67%
*Associate Members	