

Minutes – Regular Meeting
Baltimore County Soil Conservation District
January 21, 2025

The regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District was called to order by Chairman McGinnis at 8:00 am with the following present:

Supervisors

Mark Duvall
Eric Hadaway
Toby Mays
Mike McGinnis
Steve Smith

Staff

Jim Ensor, BCSCD
Ashley McAvoy, NRCS
Stu Darley, BCSCD
Jeff West, BCSCD
Essy Frey, BCSCD

Associates

Jesse Albright (Phone)
Bryan Alexander

Others

Darren Alles, MDA
Jessica Armacost, OOA
Erika Crawl, UME

Motion - Smith moved to approve the minutes of the December Board meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

Treasurer's Report – Currently, we're on target to end FY'25 lower than FY'24. Smith, Duvall and Hadaway met with Sameer Sidh, Samantha O'Neil, and Horacio Tablada on Friday, January 4, 2025. At the meeting, the County offered an additional \$80K to be paid in two installments: one in January and another in April. Their offer was contingent on the District retracting our plan review Rate Increase Notice of November 26, 2024 and if funds are available. This offer was accepted, and the rate increase was retracted. We hope to put our FY'26 budget together in the next 2 – 3 weeks.

Motion - Hadaway moved to accept the December Treasurer's report and pay the bills. The motion was seconded and passed.

Motion - Smith moved to approve \$501.00 be paid in NACD dues for FY '25. The motion was seconded and passed.

District Conservationist 's Report – In Cox's absence, McAvoy gave the following written report:

- 2 Contracts for \$77,918.00 in Baltimore County
- \$1.8 million obligated statewide of \$30.9 million in cost share allocation for FY2025 all programs.
- 24 Active Contracts
- Ranking applications with various deadlines to have rankings completed. Eligibility paperwork with FSA must be completed prior to us being able to rank the application- this includes the farms records, farm and tract number, 1026, AGI, 902 and other documents required to participate in USDA programs.
- Affiliate owned laptops will be replaced with NRCS owned devices and will be refreshed/upgraded during routine agency refresh

- Trainings for staff through UMD Extension with grazing, MDA- nutrient management and NRCS- technical trainings coming up this late winter and into spring
- CREP Meeting held with FSA to discuss CREP re-enrollments, status reviews, mid contract management, and new offers. We don't have a Farm Bill yet so no word on accepting new CREP offers just yet.
- Biosecurity- MDA issued guidance on Bird Flu and poultry operation visits as well as litter importing to farms – if field stacked, it must be covered if imported after January 8th to limit the possible spread of bird flu. Only new chicken litter piles on the Eastern shore need to be covered.

District Manager's Report – Ensor stated his report was in the packet and asked if there were any questions. An MASCD Summer Meeting planning session is scheduled for February 18, 2025 at 1:00pm. We rec'd the grant from MASCD for the National Envirothon support. Ensor distributed copies of the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) 2025 Workplan. Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) have been mailed out. The FY '26 State budget does not include any additional funds for the MACS program. Remaining funds should last through FY'26, however, staff are being urged to make sure applicants plan to actually install the practices they're applying for and not tying up funds unnecessarily.

Motion – Hadaway moved to accept the District Conservationist's and District Manager's reports. The motion was seconded and passed.

Extension – Extension's Town Hall Meeting is today, Tuesday, January 21, 2025 from noon until 2pm for external stakeholders to see what they want and are expecting from Cooperative Extension programs within the next 5 years. Eighty five (85) people have signed up for Vegetable Growers Day which is scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at Summit Manor in Hereford. Ag.Pres.101 will be held this Friday, January 24, 2025 at the Ag. Center in the large meeting room. Beginning Farmer's Training – an 8-week training session is scheduled for mid February 2025. The Deford Family of Boordy Vineyards will be inducted into the Governors Agriculture Hall of Fame. They will be recognized at the Taste of Maryland event scheduled for February 6, 2025. The Defords are the first Baltimore County Farm family to receive this honor since the mid-1990s. Ensor will attend this event.

Baltimore County Office of Agriculture – The Farmers Fair held Tuesday, January 14, 2025 went well with 32 farmers in attendance. Based on the feedback received, we're considering holding another Fair in March. Armacost said Alex Speer showed up at the Fair and was being very disruptive. Ms. Speer had to be escorted out of the Ag. Center by the Baltimore County Police Department. Whether or not she'll be allowed to return is still uncertain. The Ag. Advisory Board is wrapping up their annual recommendations which include the creation of the department of agriculture within Baltimore County Government. The next Ag. Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 27, 2025 at 1:00pm. A representative from BGE is scheduled to attend to discuss the Piedmont Reliability Project. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Town Hall Meetings are coming up. A Rise and Thrive chat is scheduled for January 27, 2025 at 8:00am.

This will be a morning of networking, support and inspiration with fellow women in agriculture. Smith said that Armacost was quoted in the December 2024 minutes as saying “some counties out pay Baltimore County by three (3) fold”. Smith asked if she would be willing to share the data that supports this statement, and Armacost agreed to. She added when comparing salaries, Baltimore, Harford, Montgomery, Anne Arundel and Howard County data is used. Cecil and Carroll have a different structure so they are not included in the comparison.

Committee Reports

Urban – West reported that the average time until review for December was 15 working days with no new priorities. Urban staff attended two meetings in December, the first meeting was on Tuesday, December 3rd with Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation. The purpose of the meeting was to improve communication, improve the quality of plan submissions, and reduce the number of submissions needed to get plans approved. The second meeting on Thursday, December 5, 2024 was our annual luncheon meeting with Permits, Approvals and Inspections – Sediment Control Inspection. A number of issues including proper placement of Stabilized Construction Entrances, prioritization of road widening, and certification of sediment basin construction prior to site disturbance were discussed. The urban staff felt that both meetings were very productive.

Personnel – No report.

Agriculture – No report.

Finance – No report.

Old Business

FY 25 County Budget – Discussed previously during this meeting.

Employee Handbook – No further progress.

2025 MASCD Summer Meeting – Discussed previously during this meeting.

2025 MASCD Winter Meeting – Scheduled for February 3 & 4, 2025 at the Westin hotel in Annapolis. Mays, McGinnis and Ensor will attend. Ensor will check and see if Baltimore County legislators are available to meet as a group on February 4, 2025.

New Business

National Envirothon Support – Discussed previously during this meeting.

MDA – Darren Alles briefly touched on his written report which was distributed during this meeting. MDA has ongoing recruitments for the Central Region for both Conservation Planner and Conservation Technician. On January 8, 2025, Secretary Atticks issued a control order for Maryland requiring specific handling, transport, and storage of poultry litter due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

MDA is in the process of outfitting employees and vehicles with biosecurity supplies to implement the heightened biosecurity steps issued by MDA to help decrease the spread of HPAI. MDA staff on the Eastern Shore have been assisting with biosecurity support tasks involved in depopulation of affected broiler operations. As of this meeting, four cases of HPAI at Maryland commercial broiler operations have been detected. WIP progress data for FY'24 was submitted to EPA in December. SSCC is considering having a fraction of its meetings outside of Annapolis to improve attendance. They're looking for SCDs willing to host these meetings. Ideal meeting locations would include a space large enough to accommodate the group, is accessible to the public, and has reliable internet access. Only new chicken litter piles on the Eastern Shore have to be covered.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30am. The next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther L. Frey
Administrative Assistant