



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

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Maryland Agricultural Commission

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Maryland Agricultural Commission Minutes December 8, 2021

Present: Joseph Dymek
Thomas Mullineaux
Kelly Dudeck
Richard Pelz
Frank Allnut
Shelby Green
Amy Crone
Michael Pons
Jonathan Quinn

Sean Hough
John Murphy
Michael Levengood
Michelle Protani- Chesnik
Clifford Newsome Jr.
Gordon Kretser
Dr. Marianne Bailey
Matthew Corey Spies

Absent: Matthew Levi Sellers
Carroll Shry Jr.
Benjamin Sowers
Donald Maring
Cheryl DeBerry
Elizabeth Hill

James Raley
Matthew Nielsen
Dr. Craig Beyroudy

MDA Staff: Julie Oberg
Richard Colburn
Cassie Shirk
Jason Shellhardt
Kevin Conroy
Hans Schmidt

Guest: Melissa Bolyard

Approval of Minutes:

November minutes were approved 1st by John Murphy and 2nd by Clifford Newsome.

Commodity Reports:

Ag Education- Joseph Dymek:

- Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF): Mobile Labs are back at schools, however there are some open dates in February and March. If you have any contacts with elementary schools, it would be appreciated if you could share this information.
- Giving Tuesday supported MAEF's Ag Literacy program. Just \$10.00 buys a book for a classroom!
- Urban Garden Grant applications will be reviewed and decisions will be made by December 15th.
- MAEF has created a new Lab in the Box kit for elementary schools using last year's Ag Literacy books and will be available in the spring.
- MAEF is working with the Sabillasville Environmental School – A Classical Charter which will focus on environmental and agricultural education for students in K-8.
- MAEF is currently looking to hire a new Communication Director.
- **FFA:** The State Officer Team just wrapped up holding their Leadership Workshops. They presented 9 virtual workshops and 3 in-person workshops (Carroll and Garrett Counties). There were 440 students and 38 adults who participated. The workshop topics were: Finding Your Passion, Pursuing Your Passion, and A Passion for Service which brought attention to the rise in suicide among the agriculture community.
- The State Officer Team will attend the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention and will continue to visit local FFA chapters.
- Annual Spring Career Events will be held, in person, on Saturday, April 2, at Westminster High School from 9-4pm.
- Plans are underway for holding an in-person State FFA Convention on the campus of UMES, Princess Anne, and June 26-30, 2022.
- **4-H:** Awarded 45 scholarships totaling \$59,000. Scholarships ranged from \$500-\$12,000. As a member of the Scholarship Committee, I was amazed at the high level of performance of all applicants. Please consider making a contribution to the 4-H Scholarship Fund.
- In the fall, 4-H awarded \$4,500 in scholarships in the form of 4 \$1000 scholarships and 1 \$500 scholarship to a youth attending the UMCP. The 4 \$1000 scholarships are part of the 4-H matching program with the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Teams:
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Dairy Judging Team: Morgan Osborn-Wothlie, Emma Schnebly, Bryce Zepp and Kelsey Zepp. Coaches were Sarah Potts and Brian Schnebly. Participated in the International Youth Dairy Cattle Judging Contest in Harrisburg, PA and the National 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Contest, World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Dairy Bowl Team: Sai (Abhi) Divvela and Elizabeth Karides. Coaches were April Barzewski and Amanda German. Participated in the 2021 North American Invitational 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl in Louisville, KY.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Poultry Judging Team: Dalena Bryant, Lillian Lawrence, and Anthony Righter. Coaches were Angelique Livezey and Lisa Righter. National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest, National Poultry and Egg Conference, Louisville, KY.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Hippology Team: Abigail Groove, Sophia Hyre and Alyssa Preece. Coached by Christy Yingling. National 4-H Eastern Round Up, Louisville, KY.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Horse Bowl Team: Carl Eckard, Raven Herron, Zoe Magnus and Angelyn Wiggins. Coached by Lisa Fulco. National 4-H Eastern Round Up, Louisville, KY.

- 2021 Maryland 4-H Horse Communication Team: Marissa Bookoff. Coached by Karen Scott. National 4-H Eastern Round Up, Louisville, KY.
- 2021 Maryland 4-H Horse Judging Team: Brianna Bongard, Eva Bryant, Megan Downing and Logan MacKenzie. Coached by Jacqueline Merriam. National 4-H Eastern Round Up, Louisville, KY.
- **MD Council for Agricultural Education:** At the October Board Meeting, the focus was internship opportunities and current policies across programs.
- New Business included: Farmer Chippy from the Baltimore City Plantation Park Heights Urban Farm, request to Governor Hogan Ag Ed funding, industry certifications for MD Ag Ed program completers, Ag program articulation agreements, and legislative updates.
- Next meeting will be January 13, 2022.

Agribusiness- Tom Mullineaux:

- I attended the Maryland Farm Bureau Convention earlier this week in Cambridge. Much accomplished. Many changes in Maryland including Legislative initiatives. Better check with your Local Farm Bureau Board member rep.
- The key word for my report is HO-HUM
- Positive attitudes continue in the Commodity markets. However, growers are watching input prices for spring. Skyrocketing fertilizer prices. The reasons continue to be World politics, US politics, global warming, the Russians, China or just Greed.
- Growers will do their best to save where they can. Crop protection prices are up.
- Retail sales SLOW. Bagged feed sales at winter levels. Several retailers have stated that everyone wants to save money on everything. Very disturbing.
- Seed sales for Corn and Soybeans flat at best. Early order and early pay Flat as well. Wheat looks good. Strong emergence. Fall sales of wheat seed were up.
- Cover crop sales weak. Growers going to their bins.
- Equipment dealers are scrambling to get parts and new equipment inventory. Tractors are very hard to find.
- Merry Christmas to All.

Agritourism- Kelly Dudeck:

- Wrapping up on fall season, apple orchards, pumpkin patches and a lot of tasting rooms saw a lot of traffic this fall and things slowly getting back to normal.
- Decent amount of crowds at the farms.
- Preparing for winter especially those with craft beverages the supply shortages are making things a little challenging so trying to prepare as much as possible.
- All of a sudden a lot of craft beverage folks who are currently assessed as agriculture and are now going to be assessed as commercial.
- Being assessed as commercial would cause a raise in property taxes.
- Want to thank Maryland Farm Bureau for recently passing a policy to support the idea that craft beverages on farms should be assessed as agricultural.

- Recently the university unveiled a new fermentation science program and we are working with an advisory committee to help with curriculum and putting together an efficient lab and allow students to do as much as they can.
- Just presented at rural Maryland summit about work being done in forestry realm.
- A new forestry economic adjustment strategy that was released last week that looked at what assets Maryland has on the ground as far as forestry and how we can better utilize them.
- Learned that there is still a lot of work that can be done with forestry and how to fix some of the misconceptions.

Aquaculture- Richard Pelz:

- Because Aquaculture is in many ways regulated differently than standard farm operations I thought I would share with my fellow commissioners some of the difference beyond 3 dimensional underwater animal husbandry.
- I will concentrate on shellfish aquaculture because I can draw from my own experience.
- To begin raising oysters on a commercial scale in Maryland it is not as simple as picking a good piece of water to start an operation. I will restrict this to just growing and selling oysters. Shucking of oysters takes another additional set of regulations.
- Selection begins with knowing it is potentially a productive area. However, In Maryland, if there are wild oysters already growing there it is not available, those areas are reserved for the public fishery. There are other areas that are also prohibited such as within 300 feet of a marina, 50 feet from shore and so on. DNR has a sighting tool that can help in the process of elimination, however in my experience, the coordinates do not match well with actual locations.
- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) looks at 28 different criteria before granting a permit any one of which can result in denial. Reviewing those can be helpful in obtaining a lease.
- Once one has located an area there is the application process.
- First fill out the DNR Army Corps Joint application form. And mail it in with a
- \$300 non-refundable application fee.
- The Application requires several maps, drawings of equipment type and layout, including overhead and cross sectional views, water depth throughout the area, the maximum of number of anchors you will use and if shell on bottom is to be used the depth of the shell to be planted. Names and addresses of adjacent landowners.
- Upon receipt of the application MDE will close the area to harvesting or planting of oysters and begin testing the water. The process can take up to 3 years.
- The Aquaculture office will then begin reviewing the application for the 28 site conflicts mentioned earlier.
- Once they have completed the initial review the application will be distributed throughout DNR for comments by other offices.
- If it passes those two reviews the application moves on to the intra-agency review process. This includes but is not limited to MDE, Maryland Health Department, Army Corps, Coast Guard, US Fish and Wildlife, and Maryland Historical Society to name a few.
- The state surveyor will then go to the site and place boundary markers for the public review process.

- If the application passes the above government reviews it is then subject to the Public Review process where the application is advertised in the local paper. The applicant is then required to pay the advertising cost.
- On each step of the review process the applicant will be required to answer all questions that are raised.
- If someone from the public requests a Public Hearing that will be held as well with applicant doing a presentation and then a question and answer period takes place. Questions raised must then be answered in writing.
- The next steps are DNR approval, Army Corp approval and Coast Guard approval which may require a permit application and then the placement of private aids to navigation such as warning signs and lights.
- Once this process has been completed and the three permits are acquired successfully a lease must be signed with the DNR legal office, the lease payment made and liability insurance purchased with the State of Maryland listed. All of this must be done before one oyster is placed in the water.
- Next there are **Requirements to operate an oyster farm** by agency.
- **MDH:** First there will be a State Health Department inspections ongoing and the annual acquisition of a Food processing license HACCP courses and water samples taken.
- A written HACCP plan reviewed annually.
- Harvest times are regulated for each site as well as transport to a licensed buyer.
- During summer harvested oysters must be to the buyer by 10am
- A record must be kept of all harvested oysters time of oysters out of the water time into refrigeration or iced temperature recorded within a specific time frame (this time frame and temperature are changing).
- **MDE** will monitor water quality bi-weekly and do a shoreline inspection annually.
- Depending on MDE's assessment there may be restrictions on harvesting due to rainfall.
- **DNR** prohibits anyone from being on the lease during the hours of darkness.
- Seed oysters must be under 1 inch in length.
- Harvested oysters must exceed 3 inches in length.
- All shellfish must have harvest tags or dealer tags on each container.
- All equipment must be labeled with the name of the lease operator and the lease number.
- Corner signs must be maintained and in place.
- No dogs may be on boats or in the water around the oyster lease.
- A legal document must be submitted monthly to DNR showing all harvests as they occurred.
- A second legal document must be submitted along with proof of purchase of seed oysters and planting.
- Natural Resource Police are the enforcement arm for various agencies.
- Harvest time restrictions not allowed on our leases after dark. During the winter when we need to harvest we have shorter days. During the summer there are further harvest time restrictions as well. Harvesters must have their product to their buyer by a set time 10 or 11am depending on the month.

Dairy I- Shelby Green:

- After attending the MDFB Convention I was able to talk to several producers across the state who were able to identify a few areas of stress. The first point made, was that after the initial shut-downs had lifted milk prices looked promising for 2021. That however is not what we saw, they mirrored a more average price over the year while the input costs continued to rise. However, things look brighter for the 2022 projections. I know it is hard to look on the bright side, the overall atmosphere feels very 'blah' as the hits have continued to keep coming. Farms continue to decrease, but there is still gratitude for the margin protection that was paid by the governor two years ago, and hopes that it will happen again.
- Labor shortages are a huge impact. Finding people to work, and work for the wages we can afford. Howard County recently passed legislation increasing their minimum wage above the states. Initially Ag was not exempt from the movement. After some dedicated work from our representatives, they were able to exclude Ag, but at what price? Those producers will have to still pay competitively if they want to find and retain employees.
- There were some farmers that felt that we should investigate other processing options for farmers in the state of MD, even as a cost sharing initiative. MDIA will continue to work on this thought process along with a marketing infrastructure to highlight products produced in the state of MD. We think that all produce, pork, beef, chickens, eggs, honey, and milk products should have that advantage as consumers continue to shift to buying local. Along with the thoughts of creating a QR code on packaging to capture younger audiences to an education platform about that product.

Direct Farm Market- Amy Crone:

- Not much to add from last month's report; DMFs and FMs are shifting to winter, when hopefully most are getting some rest and recuperation time before jumping into planning and implementing for 2022.
- Most farmers markets' seasons have ended; a few are open year-round (~7 markets throughout the state).
- The Farmers Market Nutrition Program goes through the first week of December, when farmers have to deposit checks before they expire. MDA along with other states that implement this program are looking into ways to shift this program to an electronic format since the companies that print the checks are exiting the business.
- Winter meetings and conferences continue to be a mix of in-person and hybrid but all plan to have some sort of their regular programming for DMFs and FMs.

Equine- Michael Pons:

- Thoroughbred racing at Laurel Park racetrack was cancelled on December 3, 4 and 5, 2021, after eight equine fatalities occurred over the past six weeks. Track maintenance experts from California, Florida and New York were flown in to remedy the situation. Several below-freezing nights, which resulted in a freezing/thawing of the racetrack cushion, are believed to be main concern. The track was scraped down to the base, repairs to the base were made, and then a new cushion of a different composition of several inches of sand and loamy topsoil is being reapplied. Limited training is occurring on the outside half of the racetrack, as track maintenance officials continue to monitor the situation. Entries for Friday's races have been drawn, with plans for Saturday and Sunday's cards being prepared later this week.

- The F.E. I. World Cup was successful staged for the first time at Fair Hill in October. Fair Hill is now the East Coast home of this prestigious event. Despite some Covid- related concerns and travel restrictions, international competitors and their horses were here for the four-day event. Plans have begun for the 2022 event.
- The 36th running of the Maryland Million races was held at Laurel Park, with strong attendance and handle figures. Annually, Maryland's Day at the Races is a showcase of the progeny of our state's stallions. This year, more than 100 horses competed for \$1,000,000+ purses in 12 races, with the overall simulcast handle being more than \$5,000,000.
- The Fasig-Tipton December Mixed Sales was held at the Maryland State Fairgrounds at Timonium on Tuesday, December 7, 2021. More than 400 horses were catalogued for the one-day auction. Buyers, from primarily the Eastern Seaboard and Kentucky, were represented. The sales results aren't available at the time of this submittal.
- Maryland has added three new Thoroughbred stallions for the 2022 breeding season: two stallions: Engage, by leading sire Into Mischief, and Galawi, by leading English sire, Dubawi, have arrived at Northview Stallion Station in Chesapeake City, and Fortune Ticket, by top Kentucky Sire, Candy Ride, is at Edwin Merryman's Anchor and Hope Farm in Port Deposit.

Farm Bureau- Jonathan Quinn:

- MD farm Bureau just had their annual convention at the Hyatt in Cambridge this year's theme was Cyber security and a symposium was held Sunday afternoon. The keynote speaker was Charlie Arnot from Center for Food Integrity.
- Dr. Beyrouthy and secretary Barnfelter spoke and updated everyone on what is happening at the University of Maryland and MDA.
- The new Ag Ambassador program that now replaces the Farm Queen contest was held Saturday the new program now choses on Male and one female to represent MD Farm Bureau for the year. Young farmer discussion meet was
- Held Saturday and Sunday choosing winters one representative will go to the national Young Farmer meet in February and one will go to the AFBF convention in January 2023.
- New policy was passed, the biggest debate was over community solar, election of officers was held, Wayne Stafford president, John Draper 1st vice president and Jonathan Quinn 2nd vice president were all re-elected.
- President American Farm Bureau Zippy Duval spoke at Tuesday's lunch to close out the session.
- I will be stepping down as the Farm Bureau respective on the Ag Commission due to recurring conflicts between my duties at Farm Bureau and the Ag commission. I have very much enjoyed my time on the board. Paula Linthicum
- From Montgomery County will be my replacement. She and her husband grow grain and raise beef cattle.

Livestock- Sean Hough:

- Locally livestock producers still facing some of the same issues from butchering processing stand point all our butchers and processors are backed up.
- Tough to get days to get animals processed.
- A few of the butcher shops could probably produce a little bit more but have labor shortages.
- Trying to find good, qualified meat cutters is difficult.

- From cattle stand point locally October is always a big month at the stock yards with the spring calves weaned and sent to stock yards.
- All reports from local auctions state that prices were up and number were good.
- Year to year the prices for cattle are up but this could be contribute to the feed and grain cost going up.
- On national level beef production was down a little this year and predicted to be down next year.
- Exports were down this year with the largest amount of beef exports to Japan.
- Australia and China also export a great deal of beef.
- Haven't heard much from pork producers but prices are up.
- China is the largest importers of pork, china is expected to increase their pork imports in 2022.
- Concern from pork production is that in California law they will not allow the selling of pork in grocery stores if they were not raised on certain production methods and space and issues with the old gestation houses.
- Unsure what this will due about the prices of pork and if other states will follow suit this could be an issue.
- Rachel is the University beef extension person and she is putting together a two part webinar in January and February calling it Beef 101.

Nursery II- Jonathan Murphy:

- Uncertainty in the supply chain
- Many of our nurseries are booking plant and hard goods materials beyond the normal schedules to secure the items needed for future production cycles and to lock in known price marks.
- Labor continues to be scarce.
- Fertilizer supply may be a problem this year or at least the formulations choices will be limited.
- Many greenhouse construction and maintenance companies are overwhelmed with work which in turn is reducing growth in our industry.
- HB991 5 Million Tree Bill: The MNLGA has a handful of items on this bill which will need clarification. An example is that this bill may amplify the normal supply chain shortages. Our hopes are that maybe we can amend this bill to use native plants (other than trees). Use of other plant material which is already in production can help clean up some of the overstocked items and satisfy the ultimate goals the writers of the bill are looking to achieve.
- The MNLGA has scheduled a zoom call on January 24th 2022 to open a discussion with entities of interest.
- The participants include:
 - DNR – Marian Honeczy
 - MDE – Anne Hairston-Strang
 - CBT – Jana Davis
 - MNLGA – Bernie Kohl, Leslie Cario, Ronda Roemmelt, Bryan Schlosser, Brian Mitchell, Cindy King, Jessica Todd, John Murphy, and Vanessa Finney
- MANTS 2022: January 5-7
- The show will be held with a mask mandate unless Baltimore/Annapolis changes guidelines.
- Chesapeake Green Symposium : February 17-18
- Maritime Conference Center

- This event attracts managers and some owners of our nurseries. It is a good place to see the dedicated nursery personal get together for certificate credit training.

Poultry I- Michael Levensgood:

- Researchers sound warnings on AI risk from wildfowl this winter.
- November 25, 2021 a Minn. turkey flock tests positive for H5 low-path avian flu - [Minn. turkey flock tests positive for H5 low-path avian flu](#)
In recent weeks, researchers at USDA APHIS and elsewhere have advised the poultry industry that avian influenza (AI) is unusually prevalent in the wildfowl that is migrating across the U.S. in several flight ways this year, and they've urged chicken producers and allied businesses to take seriously all the biosecurity measures that aim to prevent AI from infecting commercial and backyard flocks.
A [recent USPOULTRY podcast](#) featuring Dr. David Swayne, laboratory director at the Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory, provides insight into the current avian influenza situation in the U.S. and the need to implement preventative measures against avian influenza now.
- **In broiler report, prices fall slightly:** A new USDA report on broiler chicken production and prices (in addition to insights on other meats and dairy) shows broiler prices, on average, declined a bit for consumers in October. But the USDA expects prices for chicken to bump up again by the end of the calendar's fourth quarter. Those are takeaways from the USDA's "Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlook: November 2021," available online [here](#). The National Chicken Council's [Washington Report](#) put these price swings into a useful context while summarizing the new data: "While wholesale prices for broiler parts remain elevated from last year, they declined in October from September levels. Boneless-skinless breast prices declined by 11 percent month over month to 186.5 cents per pound. This is still more than double last October's price. Wholesale prices for chicken wings declined by six percent from September, averaging 293.9 cents per pound in October. This is 35 percent above last year. Chicken tender prices also declined by 10 percent month over month, averaging 270.67 cents per pound in October, 78 percent above October of last year."
- **USDA begins distributing CFAP 2 payments to chicken growers:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has begun [issuing approximately \\$270 million in payments to contract producers](#) of eligible livestock and poultry who applied for pandemic assistance. In Delaware, this means the distribution of approximately \$6.75 million in direct payments to chicken growers, Sen. Chris Coons's office [announced](#). Growers in Maryland and Virginia who applied for the CFAP 2 aid are also receiving the assistance.

Poultry II- Michelle Protani- Chesnik:

- Weather has remained unpredictable in temperature throughout the fall. Rain fall has been below average and ditches and ordinary wet spots on the lower shore are bone dry. Electric costs for the last flock pf chickens that I moved in October were exceptionally high due to higher-than-normal temperature. The current flock of chickens that were placed three weeks ago have seen record use of fuel (propane) due to some unusually cold temperature.
- The main concerns that I have with poultry agriculture currently are worrisome and numerous.
- Covid remains prevalent in the farm communities. While we here about this downturn in the number of cases in the state, ironically, I hear about more in my neighbors, other farm families and

those that service or are a part of the Ag community. I hear of a least one death a week and at least a few cases of Covid 19. There is a strong resistance to getting vaccinated for Covid in the rural areas. People are either afraid to get vaccinated or comment they do not want the government telling them what to do. I feel lucky that both my spouse and I are vaccinated and boosted. Trying to explain the importance of getting vaccinated sadly falls on deaf ears with many, even when they have seen friends or associates die from it.

- Cost of goods and services are skyrocketing. We are hitting 6 Percent mark on inflation overall, but in Agriculture that number has been surpassed. When a simple pack of citric that was \$ 1.10 in April is now \$ 3.19 in November. The cost of propane has risen significantly as has all utilities that are necessary to run a farming operation. The income for the farmer has not increased at all to help cover these expenses. This creates a hardship for many farm families.
- Labor is still all most nonexistent. People just do not want to work, at least not in agriculture. Even for a premium wage it is very difficult to find help. This is not only on the farm but in processing and other service providers to agriculture. Ironically as wages have risen the dollars ate buying less and less.
- Supplies are sparse and as mentioned above very costly. Staples to a farming operation such as motors for fans, fan belts, generator parts, pumps and many other essential equipment needs for farming are hard to come by. A good example a New Holland tractor poultry farm size, if you ordered in November 2021 you should get by November 2022. Who knows when and if this supply chain situation will correct?
- Poultry Housing is currently at a surplus and growers are feeling the pressure and pain from this with some of the companies. Upgrades are constantly being requested of growers and if they can't be done, there are empty houses elsewhere that companies can place birds in.
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other groups will continue to seek new legislation on Air Quality and ammonia depositions in the bay from agriculture during the upcoming legislative session.
- Maryland Department of the Environment is currently looking at CAFO operations in the 3 lower counties Somerset, Wicomico and Somerset mapping them in relation to minority and poor citizens. This is being done for Environmental Justice concerns. Many feel that these large poultry operations are too close to poor and minority citizens.

State Grange- Clifford Newsome Jr.:

- The Maryland Grange was represented by Allen & Kay Stiles at the National Grange Convention held in Kansas this year.
- Kay Stiles was re-elected to a national office.
- We are so proud that Maryland can be an important part of the Grange.
- The change of Grange officer names was on the agenda but not presented for a vote. Part of the infrastructure bill which purposes funding of Rural Internet Service appears to finally be getting funding.
- This should bring internet to Western Maryland, parts of Montgomery County and lower shore will get connected.
- The Grange has been pushing for this action for nearly ten years. Community Granges have been raising funds for improvement projects in their areas.
- Food pantries and free libraries will continue to receive our help.

Turf- Gordon Kretser:

- Cost increases have put major pressure on sod farmers to increase their prices to their customers.
- Overall cost increases at sod farms is coming in around 20% for 2021.
- Costs that sod farmers are experiencing are Fertilizer, Chemicals, Seed, Labor, Trucking, Fuel, Pallets, Equipment, and Equipment Repairs.
- Strong demand and limited amount of acres should allow farmers to pass along these increases without any pushback especially with expected home sales and prices staying strong through 2022.
- One of the largest sod farms in the region completed the acquisition of the largest landscape/landscape construction company in Maryland which leaves many other sod farms and vendors uneasy, not knowing whether they can expect those sales in 2022.
- The Maryland Turfgrass Council will have their Annual turfgrass trade show and conference in person Dec 14th at Turf Valley in Ellicott City, MD. Educational seminars and presentations will be given by numerous University and industry experts on topics such as turfgrass diseases, reducing pesticides/fertilizer usage, managing extreme weather patterns, weed control, and supply chain issues within the turfgrass industry.

Veterinary- Dr. Marianne Bailey:

- Small animal: Increased demand on small animal veterinarians causing increased wait times, overloaded schedules and complaints from clients. Concerns about mental health for all veterinarians.
- Veterinarians continue to struggle to hire staff and deal with COVID cases within hospital staff.
- Large Animal: Will look into concerns expressed by an Eastern Shore veterinarian regarding decreased demand for bovine veterinary services.

Viticulture- Corey Spies:

- Harvest is done and grapes are in the tank.
- Looking positive this year and the annual grape growers conference coming up in January and will be held online.
- Labor in the industry is hard this year. Some of the growers and wineries found it hard to find people when grapes were ready to pick.

Staff Updates:**Julie Oberg:**

- Maryland Farm Bureau convention was good to be in person with excellent attendance.
- Hope all have good holiday.

Steve Connelly:

- Maryland's Best Buyer Grower convention on January 19th at Naval Academy.
- Extended special invitation to the new Maryland chapter and they will have a meeting there.
- Shift into Dairy, we are still waiting for FFA to announce sign up for dairy margin coverage program.
- We have the ability to pay premiums this year.

- Changes to beef calculation and the change is going through the rules and then will announce sign up.
- Hopefully coming the end of the month.
- Announced who our ice cream trail blazer award family was.
- Get a lot of non-farmer families that participate in the ice cream trail.
- Promote buy local Christmas trees this month.
- Go to the farms and cut down a fresh Maryland Christmas Tree.
- Dog Breeders task force that MDA was required to provide staff for and sent a report to the legislature and we will see some legislation on the regulation of dog breeding.
- MDA and the University of MD extension received a grant for Farm Stress Program to provide physical and mental health assistant to rural Marylanders.
- New tools out there to help people in rural areas with stress.
- Extension has had some seminars and have quite a few seminars scheduled.

Jason Schellhardt:

- Working with IT department to update website to more modern platform.
- Predict update project to be done around December 20th.
- Farm and Harvest on every Tuesday night at 7pm.

Kevin Conroy:

- Working on recruitments for turf and seed, state chemist and pesticide regulations.
- Turf and seed had a conversation with the USDA about the hemp program and some revision to extend the 2014 hemp pilot for one more year.
- Trying to bring more people into the program. The acreage went down a lot this year.
- Hope legislatures look closely at the bill and how it is impacting farmers.
- Need to look more at science to regulate at federal level.
- Working with Baltimore County in spring to do a mid-spraying program in Back River.

Cassie Shirk:

- Special session started this Monday December 6th.
- The house voted to advance a congressional district map that was wrapped by a legislative advisory panel as opposed to the maps that were put forward by the Maryland's Citizens Redistricting Commission which was the commission that was established by the governor.
- Senate will take up the map that the house voted on.
- House and senate voted to override over 2 dozen bills.
- Legislative session begins January 12th.

Hans Schmidt:

- Recently gave update on filling positions in districts we have filled 49 of 53 positions.
- Last ones will start around the 1st of year. Most have started already in the district and we thank our HR department.
- It has been quite a challenge at this time due to job issues in the fields and have gone through 3 recruitments.

- Announced conservation buffer initiative sign up period starting January 10th through Feb 18th. This is a pilot program to incentive to put buffers in.
- More flexible than the current program with more mowing and haying during the year.
- The contract is a five to ten year.
- Most money paid up front from and program is more flexible.
- Get into the districts and sign up.
- Within buffer initiative offer a new incentive within the program that allows cost share for deer fencing.
- Paying for fencing along buffers that are planted but requirement is that fencing must go around the whole field. You can go to districts to find the exact requirements
- Deer continue to be an issue and trying to see how the state can help.
- Reminder that come December 16th farmers can not apply manure or other organic materials and fertilizers in fields until March 5th.
- Manure is going to be a hot commodity this year with the high cost of fertilizer.
- Go through manure transport program and ensure your manure sooner rather than later.
- The cover crops will be over 400 thousand acres.
- A lot of small grain got planted this year.
- Looking at data to be able to see how much small grain was planted and what was traditional cover crops.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:50 am respectfully submitted by: Jessica O'Sullivan