



## Maryland Department of Agriculture

*Office of the Secretary*

**Wes Moore**, Governor

**Aruna Miller**, Lt. Governor

**Kevin M. Atticks**, Secretary

**Steven A. Connelly**, Deputy Secretary

*Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board*

Agriculture | *Maryland's Leading Industry*  
mda.maryland.gov

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building  
50 Harry S Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-5882 Baltimore/Washington  
410-841-5914 Fax

## Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board Working Minutes

January 30, 2025 – 10:00 am

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87609396008?pwd=yKMM1mNWlQTWZsYlXnwteXl3FKUwC4.1>

Meeting ID: 876 0939 6008 Passcode: MDA

### **Present:**

Joe Milone, Commerce  
Ella Burrier, FFA  
Abby Efland, FFA  
Amy Roe  
Dr. Ebony Jenkins  
Miranda Rounds  
Andrew Amoruso, DNR

Charlie Sasscer  
Jenell Eck McHenry  
Martin Proulx  
Emily Wright (Virtual)  
Edward Goodman (Virtual)  
Taylor Lewis (Virtual)

### **Absent:**

JT Albright  
Tyler Mercure  
Brandon Boyer  
Nora Crist  
Mason Grahame

Kelly Stevens  
Harry Huntley  
Matt Hurd  
Tyler Rill  
Gale Livingstone

### **MDA Staff:**

Rachel Jones, Director of Government Affairs  
Susan Kivioja, Executive Associate

### **Guests:**

## **Welcome:**

The January, 2025 Young Farmers Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Jenell Eck McHenry, Chair, at 10:05 am.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the July 2024 minutes made by Miranda Rounds, seconded by Amy Rowe.

## **Young Farmer Reports:**

- Jennell Eck McHenry, Chair
  - While some counties received drought designation and are eligible for assistance, others were still extremely dry and are ineligible without the federal designation.
  - Calving season has begun, and hay supplies are limited due to the drought.
  - The Taste of Maryland Agriculture dinner will be held on February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Maryland Live! Casino, hosted by the Maryland Agriculture Council. The Young Farmers Advisory Board is invited to attend and network.
  - A Lemon Law for Agricultural Equipment will be heard in the Maryland General Assembly during this upcoming session.
  - Began a new job as the Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic 4R Nutrient Stewardship Association
  - Commodity, Extension, and other field meetings are kicking off for nutrient voucher, nutrient management, and/or pesticide applicator credits.
  - USDA Value Added Producers grant is now live
- Edward Goodman, Vice Chair
  - Represented Young Farmers at MDA's Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) program listening session, will continue to serve in conjunction with that group to support program development.
  - Aquifers are a critical resource to agriculture and are impacted by development and factors such as nuclear power plants. Aquifers in Calvert County need to be dug deeper which is an added cost for farmers and can price out young farmers from the market.
  - Opportunities:
    - Leverage slower times on the farm to attend trade shows and evaluate grant opportunities.
    - USDA FSA Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crop Producers
    - Calvert Environmental Trust for Youth (CEDY) – environmental and land trusts often have opportunities for groups to engage with the youth and talk about agriculture, regenerative practices, etc.
    - Pop-up flower festivals and native plant festivals (National Arboretum, Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival, Alexandria Native Plant Show)
      - Niche opportunities to leverage in every field.
  - The nursery license fee increase bill is a negligible amount for the industry but has a substantial impact for MDA to function and support the industry.
  - Strategic Plan Surveys that are active;
    - Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
    - University of Maryland Extension Statewide Survey

- Martin Proulx, MDA
  - UMD Policy Fellow, Aiden Boline, will be working with Martin throughout the spring semester.
    - Establishing a statewide planning document for agritourism and value-added agriculture
    - Aidan is assisting in regulatory discussions with planning and zoning offices throughout the state to gain insight on local perspectives on a county-by-county basis
- Joe Milone, Maryland Dept. of Commerce
  - New Secretary, Harry Coker, announced last week.
  - Commerce is interested in learning more about opportunities for internships and apprenticeships within the agriculture industry.
    - Many agriculturally adjacent jobs are not classified as “agricultural” in rural areas but have direct ties to the industry and provide opportunities for apprenticeships (i.e., trucking chickens in Somerset County, or welding equipment in Kent County, etc.)
- Andrew Amoruso, MD DNR
  - The 2024 fire season was very active, expecting similar conditions entering Spring 2024 given the drought conditions.
  - MD DNR is working on getting new fire crews established to assist private landowners with prescribed burns.
  - MD DNR is working on getting a 100% cost-share opportunity for timber stand improvement on forested lands.
- Abby Effland, President & Ella Burrier, Vice President, Maryland FFA
  - The President and Vice President provided updates from the Maryland FFA Officer team, highlighting activities from the Maryland State Fair, the National FFA Convention, Regional Leadership Conferences that engaged over 800 students, and the International State Leadership Seminar (Spain & Portugal).
  - The Officer team will be conducting spring chapter visits and supporting upcoming Chapter Banquets across the state.
  - National FFA Week is held in February, and the Maryland State FFA Convention will be held from June 23-25 in Garrett County.
- Emily Jackson
  - Snow & ice will have an impact on pest population.
  - Strawberries have blossomed. Eastern Shore is conscious of HPAI biosecurity.
  - NADFMA Conference upcoming, Mid Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable growers conference happening currently.
- Dr. Ebony Jenkins
  - Works for Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake as the Outreach Coordinator on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She’s an entomologist by trade.

- Amy Rowe
  - Farmers on the Shore are on high alert due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
  - Going into 2025, farmers are feeling high stress of interest rates, drought, disease, and system-wide impacts from HPAI.
  - Horizon Farm Credit's Jump Start Grant Program is live.
  - The current US Farm Bill draft includes disaster relief programs.
- Kelly Stevens
  - New and beginning farmers that are in the impact zone from HPAI but were not infected are ineligible for financial relief from USDA due to slowdowns and market volatility.
- Miranda Rounds
  - Friends Stockyard sale barn in Garrett County burned down on January 15<sup>th</sup>, impacting the livestock industry in Western Maryland and in the region.
  - Western Maryland experienced heavy snowfall over the winter which helped recharge the water table for livestock troughs.
  - A lack of feed availability from the 2024 drought has caused several farmers to sell off portions of their herds.
  - FSA, MDA and Extension leadership toured Garrett and Allegany Counties to assess drought damage. The last day to apply for drought disaster relief is in March.
- Charlie Sasscer
  - Freezing weather adds additional challenges to livestock operations, compounded with a challenging summer that resulted in lower hay inventory.

## **Board Discussion:**

- Statewide Survey
  - Just over 400 responses to the survey as of 1/30/2025
  - During the July 2024 meeting, the board moved to split the funding for the survey 50/50 to spend on incentives and promotion. Executive Leadership of the board invested in customized 26 Yeti tumblers and 1 Yeti Cooler. Leadership moved forward with the production of 1,000 post cards with the survey advertisement for disbursement at conferences, trade shows, etc., and sponsored the Taste of Maryland Agriculture to broadcast the survey as well.
  - Amy Rowe motioned to close the survey in 5 weeks on March 7<sup>th</sup>, second by Andrew Amoroso and approved by the Board.
  - Miranda Rounds motioned to disperse half of the Yeti cups on January 30<sup>th</sup>, then the remaining cups at the next Board meeting, this motion was second by Amy Rowe and approved by the Board.
    - The Executive Secretary used an online randomization software to select 16 names from the list of 400+ who had submitted the survey as of 1/30/2025 and will ship the cups to those selected winners.

**MDA Staff Update:**

- Rachel Jones provided an update on legislative priorities and proposed bills from the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

**Executive Secretary's Updates:**

- 2025 Meeting Dates
  - The board set the meeting dates for the remainder of the year.
    - 4/16/2025
    - 7/16/2025
    - 10/15/2025
- FSRC Proposal/ Ag Commission
  - The board discussed that this report will be developed from the results of the Young Farmer Survey.
- Election of Chair/Vice Chair
  - Amy Rowe nominated Jenell McHenry to remain as chair and Edward Goodman to remain as Vice-Chair. This nomination was second by Miranda Rounds and approved unanimously by the board.

**Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn made by Ella Burrier, second by Abby Effland at 11:48 am.

Respectfully Submitted by Harrison B. Palmer, Executive Secretary