



**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

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**Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board  
Minutes  
November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Present:**

Tyler Mercure  
Mason Grahame (Zoom)  
Gale Livingstone (Zoom)  
Nora Crist (Zoom)  
Amy Rowe (Zoom)  
Miranda Rounds (Zoom)  
Charlie Sasscer (Zoom)  
Jennell McHenry

Martin Proulx – MDA  
Matt Hurd – DNR (Zoom)  
Brandon Boyer  
JT Albright (Zoom)  
Emily Jackson  
Edward Goodman  
Harry Huntley

**Absent:**

Kelly Stevens  
Tyler Rill

**MDA Staff:**

Secretary Kevin Atticks  
Cassie Shirk (Zoom)  
Michelle Cable  
Michael Calkins  
Hans Schmidt (Zoom)  
Rachel Jones (Zoom)

**Guests:**

The November 2023 Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Harrison Palmer, Executive Secretary, at 10:08 AM.

#### Executive Secretary's Report & Welcome:

- Harrison Palmer, Executive Secretary, welcomed the board and explained the role of the Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board.
  - Statutory Authority: Agriculture Article, § 2-1001 et seq., Annotated Code of Maryland
  - Mission Statement: The Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board serves to promote Agriculture as a positive contributor to Maryland's economy, environment, and scenic landscape; and to make recommendations related to economic development and policy issues that will assist young and beginning farmers, and other related businesses in creating and continuing profitable Agriculture throughout the State.
  - **Primary Function**
    - Identify and address issues relating to young and beginning farmers in the state and make recommendations to the Maryland Agriculture Commission, and
    - Communicate to the public, the Federal government, the State government, and Maryland Agriculture Commission the importance of young and beginning farmers to agriculture in the State.
  - The Entity's members are composed of farmers/public, as well as a representative from each of the following: Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland Department of Agriculture and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.
- Officers will be elected in the January meeting, per statute:
  - Chairperson
    - Serves as liaison to the Maryland Ag Commission
    - Calls the meetings to order, close, and can represent the MYFAB on outward facing matters if this board so chooses.
  - Vice Chairperson
    - Support the Chair, assume those duties if Chair is unable.
  - MALPF Representative

#### Board reports/ introductions:

- Tyler Mercure
  - Choice Dairy Farm in St. Mary's County
    - Primarily grain operation with cattle & produce
  - Primary challenge: there needs to be someone to help guide young farmers through the processes for state programs, cost-share, and other opportunities.
- Mason Grahame
  - Grahame Grown Produce in Calvert County
    - Off farm job as an agricultural economist with USDA
- Gale Livingstone
  - Deep Roots Farm in Prince George's County

- Diversified vegetable operation with livestock and chickens.
    - Primary retail is through farmers markets and CSA's but looking to get into wholesale markets.
  - Primary challenge: reliable agricultural labor
- Nora Crist
  - Clarks Elioak Farm in Howard County
    - Navigating the changes post-COVID in the agritourism space.
    - There was a string of robberies in Howard & Montgomery Counties targeting agritourism industries.
    - Upcoming events:
      - Maryland Agritourism Conference @ UMES, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2023
      - North American Farmer's Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) in Boston, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> -5<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - Primary challenge: weather
- Amy Rowe
  - Works for Horizon Farm Credit in Somerset County
    - Grew up on cow/calf operation, husband operates a grain farm.
    - Primarily focused on poultry, grain, and sod within Farm Credit.
    - Previously with Farm Service Agency
  - Main challenge: no sight for interest rates going down in the near future
- Miranda Rounds
  - Beef cow/calf operation, grain, hay operation in Garrett County
    - Off farm job as a conservation planner for the Maryland Department of Agriculture
    - Noticing higher beef prices in 2023
  - Main challenge: nutrient management changes will affect Western Maryland greatly, there is no one in Western Maryland to write plans.
- Charlie Sasscer
  - Beef cattle and custom grazing in Prince George's & St. Mary's County
    - Off farm job as the University of Maryland Extension Ag Marketing Professional for Prince George's County
  - Main challenge: how can we facilitate young farmers onto rented property to eliminate some of the interest rate challenges?
- Jennell Eck McHenry
  - Grain operation, custom grain, cow/calf, direct to consumer beef, hay, manure trucking in Kent County
    - Off farm job with Thompson Ag Consulting
      - Maryland Grain Producers, Maryland Pork Producers, Maryland Delaware 4R Alliance, Certified Crop Advisor's
    - Concerned with the amount of wheat acres in MD, some are transitioning to brewers barley.

- Issues with right-to-farm in Talbot County, existing farm that was purchased by a new farmer and their right to continue agricultural practices on that property.
  - Main challenge: potential legislation for cage-free chickens, potential Prop-12 legislation. Mental health in the young farmers community, but also in the agricultural community. Right to farm.
- JT Albright
  - Diversified operation of vegetable, turkeys, beef, grain, eggs, direct-to-consumer/ farmer's market in Baltimore County
    - Heavily involved in Baltimore County Farm Bureau, currently serves as President.
      - LEAD Maryland Class XII
    - New office of agriculture in Baltimore County
  - Main challenge: agritourism and definitions limiting opportunities.
- Emily Jackson
  - Agritourism operation with beef & vegetables in Dorchester County
    - Focusing on meeting the needs of local consumers while adapting to the new markets.
  - Main challenge: consumer spending and navigating the customer base, local spending seems to be down but pass-through traffic that is traveling to spend money seems to be up.
- Edward Goodman
  - Goodman LLC in Calvert County
    - Off farm job with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning as a horticulturalist
    - Focuses on native plant production.
  - Main challenge: erosion is a major challenge in Maryland, how do we introduce native vegetation as an erosion control measure?
- Kelly Stevens
  - Poultry operation, Aberdeen Farm, in Somerset Country
    - Off farm job in real estate.
    - Poultry densities have been lowered, but growers are being compensated by Perdue until it returns to normal. Biosecurity remains on the forefront of everyone's mind.
    - High interest rates are forcing buyers to hold off on purchasing and save money, many purchases moved off-market to private sales.
    - Lack of racial diversity in the respondents to the 2015 Young Farmers survey, the poultry industry especially in Worcester County isn't very well represented.
  - Main challenges: labor costs, lack of access to capital to invest in operations such as poultry, high interest as a barrier to entry.

- Harry Huntley
  - Agricultural policy analyst for the Environmental Policy Innovation Center
    - Focuses on optimizing existing conservation programs.
    - Manages farmers market in Baltimore.
  - Main challenge: how are Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts going to change in the future?
  
- Tyler Rill
  - No report.
  
- Martin Proulx, MDA
  - Value Added Agriculture Specialist at Maryland Department of Agriculture
    - Navigating the role of MDA in the VAA space, how can the State be laying out the framework for businesses to be successful.
    - Serving as the centralized point of contact for counties as agritourism gains in popularity.
  - Main challenge: no clear guidance for agritourism in the state, often county and state regulators are unaware of the policies and practices of agritourism operations.
  
- Matt Hurd, DNR
  - Maryland Forest Service through the Department of Natural Resources
    - Newer to farming, but many forestry programs are targeted to farmers and young farmers.
  
- Brandon Boyer, MD FFA
  - President of Maryland FFA
    - Brings perspective of high school ag students and the opportunities that can be presented to facilitate them into Maryland agriculture.

### **MDA Staff Updates:**

- Rachel Jones, Director of Legislative Services at MDA
  - Departmental bills from MDA will focus on updating fees for programs.
  - Forecasting bills that will be brought to the legislature:
    - Cold storage opportunities
    - Organic composting facilities on-farm
    - Aggressive clean energy goals that can affect agriculture.
    - Deer management
  
- Cassie Shirk
  - Assistant Secretary for Animal Industries, Marketing, Consumer Services
    - HPAI incident in Caroline County
      - Emergency management team serves as the boots on the ground.
      - Emphasis on good biosecurity practices
    - Maryland's Best Website upgrades
      - Very Merry Maryland promotion efforts
      - Encouraging blue catfish

- Hans Schmidt
  - Assistant Secretary for Resource Conservation
    - Pressure on agricultural land to meet climate goals and food production.
      - What is the balance between the environment and food production?
    - The best land use for the environment will always be agriculture.
    - Nutrient management task force drafted a report that has been presented to the Nutrient Management Advisory Committee.
      - Goals are to simplify nutrient management planning, increasing education and outreach, and improve software.
    - Newly developed Small Farm & Urban Agriculture program
      - Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee is being put together.
    - Equite and Climate Coordinator was hired within the last 4 months.
- Martin Proulx
  - Value Added Agriculture Specialist
    - MDA and USDA-AMS Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) grant program
      - Maryland's cooperative agreement establishes approximately \$3.5 million for equipment and infrastructure grants.
      - More information will come at the next meeting.
- Michael Calkins
  - Assistant Secretary for Plant Industries and Pest Management
    - Former Chairman of Young Farmers Advisory Board
- Secretary Kevin Atticks
  - Secretary, Maryland Department of Agriculture
    - These boards and commissions are used to provide input to guide decisions within the department.
    - Encourage Young Farmers to use this opportunity to develop relationships with other farmers, but also with the department.

**Board Discussion:**

- Meeting Dates for 2024
  - Third Wednesday, quarterly (January, April, July, October) at MDA
- Interest in revitalizing the Maryland Young Farmers Survey.
- Interest in exploring opportunities to create documents on behalf of the young farmer community for use in advancing policy or decisions.

**MALPF Presentation:**

- Michelle Cable, Executive Director of MALPF
  - The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation deems at least one member must be representative from the Young Farmers group.

Motion to adjourn made by Edward Goodman, second by Gale Livingstone at 12:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Harrison Palmer, Executive Secretary