

MHIB Open Session Minutes

June MHIB Board Meeting:
FRIDAY, June 26th, 2026, at 10am at the Loch Moy
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The Meeting started at 10:05

Meeting Start: Call to Order: Sheila Curry, Chair

Present: Sheila Curry (MHIB Chr.), Cassie Shirk (Assistant Sec'y of Agriculture), Dr. Amy Burk (MHIB V. Chr.) Erin Ochoa, Lisa Watts, Peggy Morgan, Anne Litz, Carolyn Mackintosh*,

Unable to Attend: Genevieve Macfarlane, Jennifer Sulin, Dr. Kathy Anderson Jenile Tapscott, , Oliver Kennedy, Connie Sawyer, Ellen James

* Carolyn Mackintosh was not able to join the entire meeting but was out host

Also in Attendance: Emma Patterson, Gina Maybee, Becky Remsberg, Becca Tucker, Judith Hartman, Eleanor Albert, Linda Macklin, Calli Ivester, Neil Agate, Jane Thery, Kim Egan, Claire Lacey, Dr. Tim Gardner

The meeting was convened without a quorum. As a result, approval of the previous meeting minutes was deferred until the next scheduled Board meeting. Members and guests were welcomed, including representatives from state agencies, industry organizations, tourism, academia, equine welfare organizations, and other stakeholders

Minutes: No Quorum

Committee Updates & Discussion – Executive Director Reports:

Licensing and Stable Inspection Update

Anne Litz provided an update on the annual stable licensing renewal process. License renewals are currently underway for the new fiscal year, with nearly half of Maryland's licensed stables having completed the renewal process. The online OneStop licensing system continues to function well, although many applicants require assistance navigating the platform. Paper applications remain available but require significant manual processing.

Board members were reminded that licensed stables technically become unlicensed after July 1 if they have not renewed, although a grace period remains in place before late fees are assessed. Litz also reported that the Board is taking a more proactive approach toward facilities operating without a required license by issuing certified notices and encouraging compliance through education and enforcement.

Stable Inspection Report

Peggy Morgan, stable inspector

The Board received a summary of recent stable inspections conducted throughout Peggy's territory. Several newly licensed facilities and existing operations were inspected and found to be in good condition, with many owners making significant improvements to barns, fencing, and pasture management.

MHIB reviewed several complaint investigations involving manure management, water availability, hay access, and general horse care. In each case, inspectors worked collaboratively with stable owners to address deficiencies and verify corrective actions. The Board reiterated that its inspection program focuses on education, compliance, and horse welfare while working closely with local animal control agencies and other partners when necessary.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The Board reviewed its anticipated meeting schedule for the remainder of the year, including virtual meetings, meetings held at the Maryland State Fair, August 27th, Fair Hill October 15th, November a virtual meeting and the annual grants meeting in December. Members were encouraged to suggest future meeting locations throughout Maryland to increase industry engagement.

Legislative and Financial Updates

The Maryland Department of Agriculture presented several legislative concepts being considered for the 2027 legislative session. Discussion focused on the Board's long-standing stable licensing fee, which has not been increased for many years. Assistant Secretary, Cassie Shirk explained that an increase could generate additional revenue needed to support a second MHIB staff position and strengthen Board operations.

Board members discussed the financial pressures already facing horse farms and expressed concerns about increasing costs for licensed facilities. Several members suggested that adjustments to the Feed Fund assessment may distribute costs more broadly across the industry rather than concentrating them on licensed stables. Members also recommended conducting an audit of Feed Fund collections to determine whether all required revenue is currently being collected.

Additional discussion included:

- Establishing a handling fee for paper license applications to offset processing costs.

- Creating prorated licensing fees for new stables that become licensed later in the fiscal year modeled after the Vet Board
- Exploring ways to provide additional value or recognition for licensed facilities through promotional materials or marketing initiatives.

Cassie and Anne, will prepare additional information for Board review prior to the July meeting.

Website Redevelopment

Staff reported that the Maryland Horse Industry Board website is currently being migrated from SharePoint to Drupal as part of the statewide website modernization initiative. Significant work is being completed to ensure full ADA accessibility compliance, requiring extensive review of documents, images, and web content.

Although the new website will eventually be more streamlined, staff emphasized that the transition requires considerable time and technical support. The Board acknowledged the workload associated with managing the website and again recognized the need for additional staffing resources.

Animal Health Update

Report from Dr. Trout, given by Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture provided an update regarding the emergence of New World Screwworm cases in Texas and New Mexico. Maryland has implemented enhanced import requirements for livestock entering the state from affected areas, including recent veterinary inspection certificates. Board members were encouraged to remain informed through MDA communications and continue monitoring the situation.

Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan

Anne Litz provided an update on the Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan. The Steering Committee has completed its fifth working session, and the facilitator is now preparing the first draft of the strategic plan. The draft will undergo review by the Steering Committee and state agencies before its anticipated release in September.

Discussion highlighted recurring themes emerging from the planning process, including:

- The need for improved statewide data collection.
- Increased marketing and public awareness.
- Greater collaboration among horse industry sectors.
- Development of unified strategies that strengthen Maryland's entire horse industry ecosystem.

The Board noted the value of bringing diverse industry sectors together and the positive collaboration occurring throughout the planning process.

Maryland Horse Career Program

The Board received a report on the expanded Maryland Horse Career Program, formerly known as the Maryland Thoroughbred Career Program. The program, still run and funded by the Maryland Horse Breeders Association, now represents the broader horse industry and provides participants with exposure to numerous career opportunities beyond traditional barn work and veterinary medicine.

The 2026 program successfully incorporated overnight travel, allowing participants to visit breeding farms, veterinary facilities, educational institutions, and equine businesses across Maryland. Board members praised the program's success and discussed opportunities for future expansion through workforce development grants and additional partnerships while maintaining the program's highly personalized learning experience.

Horse Council members suggested expanding the program and making it bigger. Anne recommended they contact MHBA about their current blue print and can work to expand one of their own.

Horse Outreach Work Group

Becky Remsberg from the Horse Outreach Work Group provided updates on ongoing educational outreach efforts across Maryland. The group continues visiting horse farms to provide conservation resources, best management practice information, and educational materials.

The Board also received an update from Becky. on the upcoming Equine Conservation Summit scheduled for November, with registration expected to open later this summer. Staff also discussed recent changes to Maryland Agricultural Cost Share funding percentages. The FY2026 capital budget did not include new MACS capital funding, relying instead on existing fund balances to continue projects. During the FY2027 budget process, the Governor and General Assembly restored approximately \$8 million in capital funding for the MACS program after conservation organizations advocated for reinstatement

Maryland Horse Park System

Anne Litz reported that the Maryland Horse Park System website remains operational and ready for future expansion. Although updates have been limited due to staffing capacity, the website continues to serve as a central resource for events and participating facilities. Board members discussed the importance of securing additional funding and staffing to further develop the initiative.

Facility and Industry Updates

- **Prince George's Equestrian Center and the Washington International Horse Show:**
Linda Macklin of WIHS: Preparations continue for the upcoming competition season,

including expansion of competition offerings and continued planning for international hospitality events.

- **Fair Hill:** Dr. Tim Gardner reported successful spring racing events and shared positive progress toward restoring the Maryland 5 Star event beginning in 2027. The Select Event Group continues preparations for the 2026 CCI3*-L while pursuing the return of the CCI5*-L.

Charlie Fenwick, and Dr. Gardner had the opportunity to meet Secretary Coker of Judy Smith, that was there. They were very impressed with the secretary's interest in the horse industry from a commerce perspective and thanks to Judy Smith and her addition to considerations, and plans.

- **Maryland Horse Library and Education Center:** Eleanor Albert reported recent educational programming focused on estate planning for horse owners and families, with recordings being made available for future viewing.
- **Pimlico Redevelopment:** Members received an update on ongoing construction, with racing anticipated to return to Pimlico prior to the 2027 Preakness. Temporary facilities will support the event while permanent grandstand construction continues.
- **Preakness Intellectual Property:** The Board discussed the State of Maryland's acquisition of the Preakness intellectual property rights, recognizing the purchase as a major investment in preserving Maryland's long-term leadership within Thoroughbred racing and protecting one of the state's most valuable equine assets. Round of applause and many thanks to the Governor.

Administrative Reports:

Standardbred Industry: Lisa Watts

Rosecroft Raceway highlighted a robust schedule of community events designed to introduce new audiences to Maryland's horse industry, including festivals, concerts, food events, and community programming. Members encouraged organizations to provide promotional materials that can be distributed during these events to expand public awareness of equestrian activities across the state.

Rosecroft has brought in the Fort Washington Food Pantry and they will have the first annual celebration for them being their year in September. They're doing a phenomenal job of providing food and services to the community around us. Rosecroft is going to work with them to build a community garden, as well.

Racing will be at Ocean Downs until it comes back to Rosecroft after Labor Day.

Trade & Support Industries: Sheila Curry

WIHS will have Embassy Night again so keep an eye out for that October Invitation

Humane Societies: Erin Ochoa

On going animal control officer training, expansion of rescue and educational facilities, and continued collaboration among industry organizations to strengthen workforce development, conservation, tourism, and public outreach. Days End's new building is finally permit ready. Howard County has giving them a green light, so hopefully next year will be up and running, and that'll expand their classroom ability from 60 people to about 200.

MD Dept. of Agriculture: Cassie Shirl – no other updates

Equine Academic Community: Dr. Amy Burk:

It is summer time at UMD!

University of Maryland Equine Program Update

An update University of Maryland's ongoing efforts to secure additional land or funding for a new equestrian center. The current equine facilities are significantly constrained, with the horse barn, turnout areas, and riding ring occupying approximately one acre. While the program has successfully operated within these limitations for many years, continued campus growth and development have steadily reduced available land surrounding the facility.

The University has been exploring several potential solutions. Representatives from the Prince George's County Soil Conservation District have evaluated potential sites and provided feedback, which is being shared with University leadership. It was also noted that University administration has been exploring the possibility of acquiring land associated with the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center should it become available through federal disposition. While discussions are reportedly occurring at high levels, no formal plans or commitments have been made.

Despite the facility limitations, the University continues to maintain a vibrant and successful equestrian program. The University supports an intercollegiate polo team, an IHSA equestrian team, an eventing team, and an equestrian club that utilizes the University's horses. The Board recognized that the University's location near Washington, D.C., has contributed to increasing development pressure and the ongoing challenge of preserving land for equestrian use.

Maryland Horse Council: Give by Jane Seigler

Maryland Horse Council and Trails Update

A legislative update was provided, noting that the General Assembly has been out of session since mid-April and there have been no significant legislative developments affecting the horse industry. The primary focus has shifted to ongoing discussions with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Maryland Office of Outdoor Recreation's quarterly stakeholder meetings, which bring together trail user groups to improve communication and address issues affecting public lands.

A significant topic of discussion involved the Patuxent Wildlands, where long-standing concerns continue regarding trail maintenance and emergency access. DNR reiterated that trails were never intended to exist within designated Wildlands; however, equestrians, hunters, and other recreational users have established trails over many years. While equestrian and other user groups have advocated for allowing trained volunteers to clear and maintain trails, DNR remains opposed as work must be done and overseen by DNR and intends to complete all maintenance using its own staff and specialized equipment. Negotiations between user groups, local emergency responders, and DNR are ongoing, and no final resolution has been reached.

An update was also provided on activities at Fair Hill. The Fair Hill Special Event Zone successfully hosted the spring racing event as well as several Pony Club competitions. It was noted that the CCI3*-L and Young Horse Championships will be held outside the Special Event Zone this year while preparations continue for the anticipated return of the Maryland 5 Star in 2027.

DNR also announced continued development of its statewide "Share the Trails" educational campaign, which is intended to improve trail etiquette and increase awareness among all recreational users. The Maryland Outdoor Recreation Summit will be held on Maryland's Eastern Shore on September 30 and October 1, bringing together outdoor recreation organizations and stakeholders from across the state.

The Council reported that DNR has begun allowing Class 1 electric bicycles on selected natural surface trails within state lands.

Considerable discussion centered on recent bridge failures involving horses at both Patuxent State Park and Rosaryville State Park. A second bridge incident at Rosaryville resulted in only minor injuries. DNR officials acknowledged that while bridges and other park infrastructure are intended to be inspected on a rotating schedule, resource limitations prevent all structures from being inspected as frequently as planned. DNR committed to rebuilding the entire bridge.

Stakeholders discussed better methods for riders to report unsafe conditions, including using GPS location pins to identify problem areas more accurately. Improving emergency response, infrastructure monitoring, and communication between trail users and DNR remains an ongoing priority.

Public Comment

The Chair opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were received.

Motion to Enter Closed Session:

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Open Session and enter Closed Executive Session pursuant to Maryland General Provisions Article §3-305 to consult with staff, consultants, and counsel regarding pending legal and enforcement matters. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

The Open Session adjourned at approximately 11:32 PM before the Board entered Closed Session.

Respectfully submitted, Anne Litz, Executive Director