

DRAFT

MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

Date: ~~Friday~~ Tuesday, July 26~~8~~, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting (Google Meet)

Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting started at 10:03: Call to Order Sheila Curry, Chair

Roll call was conducted by Executive Director Anne Litz.

Present: Sheila Curry (Chr.), Dr. Amy Burk (V. Chr.), Kevin Atticks, Jenile Tapscott, Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk, Erin Ochoa, Lisa Watts, Jennifer Sulin, Carolyn Mackintosh, Dr. Kathleen Anderson, Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane,

Unable to Attend: Oliver Kennedy, Connie Sawyer

Also in Attendance: Peggy Morgan, Ellen James, Judy Smith, Cricket Goodall, Laura Lane-Unsworth, Gina Maybee, Susie Husk, Sandy Turner, Eleanor Alberts, Dr Jennifer Trout, Becky Remsburg, Jane Seigler, Alexandria Lui, Cassandra Vanhooser, Trish Brown, Fritz Widaman,

Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan Update

Secretary Kevin Atticks thanked the members of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, industry stakeholders, and partner state agencies for their collaboration in developing the Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan. He noted that the plan is nearing completion and will provide the Governor and partner agencies with a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen every sector of Maryland's horse industry. Secretary Atticks remarked that his recent travels across the state have reinforced the significant role the equine industry plays in every region of Maryland, while also highlighting that its economic and community impact is often underrecognized. He emphasized that the Strategic Plan presents an important opportunity to showcase the full breadth of the industry, identify priorities, and establish a clear path for future growth. Secretary Atticks thanked all participants for their engagement, patience, and collaboration throughout the planning process, and recognized Executive Director Anne Litz for her leadership in guiding the initiative to its final stages.

Approval of Minutes

The Board approved the May 2026 regular meeting minutes, the May 2026 Closed Session minutes, and the June 2026 meeting minutes by unanimous vote.

Presentations

Judy Smith, Maryland Department of Commerce provided an update on new partnerships between Commerce and the Maryland Horse Industry Board, including economic development resources, tourism collaboration, industry-specific business resources, and incorporation of the horse industry into the State's economic development planning. Cassandra Vanhooser, Managing

Director of Tourism, introduced herself and discussed opportunities to strengthen equine tourism partnerships.

The Maryland's Best presentation was postponed.

Executive Director & Committee Updates

Stable licensing renewals were reviewed. Approximately 629 stables had renewed for FY2027, with late fees scheduled to begin September 1st. Inspectors Peggy Morgan and Ellen James reported several newly licensed facilities across the state and noted that inspections continue to show good compliance. The Board discussed unlicensed stables, software improvements, paper applications, and the positive relationships inspectors have developed with stable operators.

Inspector **Peggy Morgan** reported six newly licensed stables: Flight and Fortune (Montgomery County), Clover Creek Stables (Howard County), Plot Twist Horse Farm (Howard County), Misty Step Stables (Montgomery County), Fair Play Farm (Montgomery County), and Happy Honeysuckle Healing Center (Howard County). She also noted the closure of Single Arrow Farm in Prince George's County, reported that Fox-Wood Farms is now housing five Ocean City Police horses, and shared that inspections throughout her region found facilities to be well maintained and in good condition.

Inspector **Ellen James** reported eight newly licensed facilities: Stafford Equine Rescue Sanctuary and Living the Dream Equestrian (Carroll County); Hope in a Horseshoe, Inc. (Harford County); Wastler Family Farm (Washington County); Granite Springs Stables and Pond View Acres (Cecil County); City Ranch (Baltimore City); and Shepherd's Pastures (Frederick County). She also updated the Board on a court appearance involving 2nd Hand Horses Rescue and Rehabilitation Home Farm, noting that the case was dismissed after the horses were found to be in satisfactory condition.

Board Member Lisa Watts thanked Ellen for her work with problem stables and Ellen thanked the Board for their support.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule 2026: August 27th Maryland State Fair, Sept TDB, October 15th– In Person, November 17th– Virtual, Dec – Grants Committee. Requested Location Suggestions for 2027

MDA & Legislative Updates

Assistant Secretary Cassie Shirk announced that Allie Cavanaugh has joined the Maryland Department of Agriculture as Legislative Director and will be invited to a future MHIB meeting.

Ms. Shirk provided an update on the Maryland Equine Feed Fund, noting that she and Executive Director Anne Litz continue to review the program with MDA staff to identify opportunities to modernize and streamline its administration. The current process remains labor-intensive, relying on paper forms, manual submissions from feed manufacturers, and multiple processing steps within the Department. Staff will continue evaluating options to simplify the program and improve efficiency and will provide additional updates at future meetings.

Ms. Shirk also reported that the Governor's Office has approved moving forward with a departmental bill to consider an increase to the Maryland Horse Industry Board stable licensing fee. She emphasized that no action was required at this meeting, but requested Board input to help determine an appropriate fee increase before legislation is finalized. She noted that the current licensing fee has remained unchanged for many years while personnel, travel, and operating costs have steadily increased. Additional revenue would help the Board expand industry programs, sponsorships, and communications while supporting the additional responsibilities identified through the Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan. Board members expressed support for increasing the stable licensing fee, noting that the Board's expanding responsibilities, including implementation of the Strategic Plan, marketing initiatives, the Maryland Horse Park System, and new partnerships with the Department of Commerce.

Board members discussed several considerations regarding the proposal. Members generally supported pursuing a fee increase but recommended reviewing multiple options, including exploring a flat increase or a tiered fee structure based on the size of the licensed stable. Discussion also included the importance of communicating the value provided to licensed stables through Board programs and services.

D. Amy Burk recommended that continued evaluation of the Feed Fund accompany the fee discussion to demonstrate sound financial stewardship. She suggested exploring a limited compliance review of Feed Fund reporting and noted that the Board should be prepared to address questions from the industry regarding both revenue sources.

Ms. Shirk acknowledged those concerns and explained that, due to legislative deadlines, the licensing fee proposal and Feed Fund modernization would likely proceed on separate timelines. She emphasized MDA's commitment to continuing the Feed Fund review while advancing the fee proposal.

Following discussion, MHIB was directed to prepare several fees increase options, including projected revenue impacts and potential implementation approaches, for Board review at a special meeting prior to submission of the Department's legislative package

Animal Health

Dr. Trout reported that Maryland has experienced 11 cases of strangles in the state, so doing slightly better than we were in 2025. Members also received an update on New World Screwworm detections in Texas and New Mexico, new import requirements, and recommendations for reporting suspicious cases. Animal Health will distribute educational information to licensed stables.

Other Program Updates

Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF)

Executive Director Anne Litz reported that the Maryland Horse Industry Board continues to partner with MDA's Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) initiative. Although Elizabeth Hoffman was unable to attend the meeting, the Board remains engaged with the program and will continue supporting its outreach and educational efforts. Additional updates are expected at a future meeting.

Horse Outreach Workgroup (HOW)

Becky provided an update on the Horse Outreach Workgroup (HOW), announcing that the annual HOW Conservation Summit will be held on November 14, 2026, in St. Mary's County. Registration is expected to open in mid-August, and event information will be shared through the organization's website and the Board's communications.

Prince George's Equestrian Center

Chair Sheila Curry reported that the Prince George's Equestrian Center continues to host a full schedule of equestrian events and is preparing for its major fall competitions, including Capital Challenge Horse Show and the Washington International Horse Show. She also announced that Embassy Night will return on October 24, with invitations to be distributed to Board members.

Maryland Horse & Pony Show

Chair Curry updated the Board that the Maryland Horse & Pony Show has temporarily relocated to Virginia for 2026 due to a scheduling conflict between the Prince George's County Fair and the horse show at the Prince George's Equestrian Center. The relocation was due solely to facility availability, and the Board expressed its support for the event while encouraging its return to Maryland in 2027. The Maryland Horse Industry Board will continue its planned sponsorship of the show.

Fair Hill Special Events Zone

Trish Brown, representing the Department of Natural Resources, reported that Fair Hill has successfully partnered with the Delmarva Pony Club Region to host Pony Club rallies and continues to expand year-round use of the Special Events Zone. Although horse racing will not return in 2026, DNR is working with industry partners to restore racing in 2027. She also reported that while the Maryland Five Star is taking a planned hiatus this year, the Maryland CCI3*-L and Young Event Horse Championships will proceed in October under Select Event Group and Fair

Hill International. DNR also launched its statewide "Share the Trail" campaign to promote safe trail use among equestrians, hikers, and cyclists, with educational materials being distributed across Maryland.

Maryland Horse Library & Education Center

Cricket Goodall reported that the Maryland Horse Library continues to offer successful public educational programming, including a recent presentation featuring draft horses and the Draft & Mule Association. Additional monthly educational programs are planned for August, with preparations underway for fall outreach activities surrounding Maryland Million.

Pimlico Redevelopment

Fritz Widaman provided an update on the Pimlico redevelopment project, reporting that construction remains on schedule. He noted that the 2027 Preakness Stakes will utilize temporary spectator facilities while the new stakes barns and paddock are completed, with the permanent grandstand anticipated for 2028. Board members were encouraged to view monthly construction updates posted online. Additional updates included preparations for new media rights announcements, approval of one of the redevelopment logos, Maryland Jockey Club presentations at Saratoga, planning for the September racing meet, and sponsorship efforts for the Maryland Million on October 24.

Other Program Updates

Upcoming outreach opportunities including the Maryland State Fair, Maryland Million, and the Washington International Horse Show.

Administrative Reports – Industry Sector Board Members

Licensed Veterinarians – Dr. Kathleen Anderson

No additional report was provided.

Thoroughbred Sector – Jenile Tapscott

Racing returns to Maryland at the Big T – The Maryland State Fair, August 28-30 and September 4 – September 7.

Standardbred Sector – Lisa Watts

Ms. Watts reported that the Standardbred racing season is underway at Ocean Downs, with live racing scheduled on Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays through September 7 before returning to Rosecroft Raceway on September 14. She highlighted several community outreach events, including dog adoption days and a Back-to-School Bash at Ocean Downs, as well as a Community Day hosted by Rosecroft Raceway, the Fort Washington Food Pantry, and the Cloverleaf Standardbred Horsemen's Association featuring backpack giveaways and family activities. Ms. Watts also recognized the passing of longtime owner, trainer, and driver Ken Wood, noting his significant philanthropic contributions, including funding water wells and eye

surgeries in Ghana and other parts of Africa through the success of his racehorse, J.L. Cruz. She remarked that his passing is a significant loss to the Maryland Standardbred community.

Maryland Horse Council – Carolyn Mackintosh

Ms. Mackintosh reported that the Maryland Horse Council continues to monitor legislative and policy issues affecting the equine industry, including recent horse welfare legislation. She noted that, with many new members expected to join the Maryland General Assembly in January, the Horse Council will prioritize outreach and relationship-building with newly elected legislators to increase awareness of the horse industry's economic, agricultural, and community contributions. She encouraged the equine community to actively engage with new lawmakers to strengthen support for the industry.

Trade & Support Industries – Connie Sawyer

No report was provided.

Organized Shows & Events – Sheila Curry

Chair Curry reported that the Prince George's Equestrian Center continues to host a full schedule of competitions and is preparing for the Capital Challenge Horse Show and the Washington International Horse Show. She also announced that Embassy Night will return during WIHS. Chair Curry further updated the Board that the Maryland Horse & Pony Show has temporarily relocated to Virginia for 2026 due to a facility scheduling conflict and expressed optimism that the event will return to Maryland in 2027.

Trails & Recreational Riding – Jennifer Sullivan

Ms. Sullivan voiced support for increasing the stable licensing fee and observed that even a \$50 increase would generate only modest additional revenue. She encouraged the Board to consider whether a larger increase would better meet future program needs.

At Large – Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane

Ms. Macfarlane reported that Maryland's fall equestrian season is underway, with hunt clubs beginning hound exercise and introductory clinics for new riders across the state. She highlighted the wide variety of equestrian activities available throughout the late summer and fall, including trail riding, dressage and schooling shows, county fairs, Pony Club rallies, horse trials, harness racing at Ocean Downs, therapeutic riding volunteer opportunities, and racing at Timonium and Laurel Park. She also recognized the Fair Hill Emergency Response Team for its prompt response to a recent equine emergency. Ms. Macfarlane encouraged Board members and the public to explore new equestrian disciplines and events and to take advantage of the many opportunities to experience Maryland's diverse horse industry.

Humane Societies – Erin Ochoa

No report was provided

Maryland Department of Agriculture – Cassie Shirk

Praise for the strategic plan work

Equine Academic Community – Dr. Amy Burk

Dr. Burk reported that the University of Maryland is in the process of hiring a new equine lecturer whose primary responsibilities will focus on equine education. The additional faculty position will support the development of new courses and enable the University to offer an equine minor. She also shared that the University will lead the November Bender Educational Series at the Maryland Horse Library, focusing on Equine-Assisted Learning, and requested recommendations for experienced Maryland professionals who could present on developing and operating equine-assisted learning programs.

Licensed Stables – Oliver Kennedy

No report was provided.

Public Comment

Maryland Horse Library & Education Center – Cricket Goodall

Ms. Goodall informed the Board of the passing of Bill Reightler, a respected bloodstock agent, foxhunter, and longtime supporter of Maryland's horse industry. She noted that Mr. Reightler played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Maryland Horse Library and Education Center and served on its board during its development. In accordance with his family's wishes, memorial contributions may be made to the Maryland Horse Foundation in support of the Maryland Horse Library, reflecting his lasting commitment to the organization and the industry. Dr Amy Burk asked the room about how to find out more about Western Riding in Maryland

Western Riding & Industry Outreach Discussion

The Board discussed opportunities to better promote Maryland's Western equine community and improve public access to information on Western boarding stables, riding programs, clubs, competitions, and events. Members noted that while numerous Western organizations and activities exist throughout the state—including rodeo, barrel racing, ranch riding, reining, and youth programs—there is currently no single, comprehensive resource for the public. Board members proposed reconvening the MHIB Western Riding Committee to compile available resources, collaborate with industry partners including the Maryland Horse Council and The Equiery, and explore developing a dedicated Western riding resource page through the Maryland Horse Park System or other platforms. The discussion also highlighted recent successes of Maryland's Western riders, including strong performances by the Maryland High School Rodeo Team at the National High School Finals Rodeo, and emphasized the importance of increasing visibility for this growing sector of Maryland's horse industry.

Adjournment

The Open Session adjourned at 11:13 PM

Respectfully submitted, Anne Litz, Executive Director