

Minutes:

Maryland Horse Industry November Board Meeting: MHIB Board Meeting: Virtual
Thursday Nov. 13th, 2025: Google Meets Thursday, November 13 · 10:00am – 12:00pm Google
Meet joining info

<https://meet.google.com/wav-rbse-ohk>

The Meeting started at 10:01am

Meeting Start: Call to Order: Sheila Curry, Chair

Present: Sheila Curry (Chr.), Dr. Amy Burk (V. Chr.), Jenile Tapscott, Connie Sawyer, Steve Connelly, Cassie Shirk, Erin Ochoa, Lisa Watts, Jennifer Sulin, Carolyn Mackintosh, and Dr. Kathleen Anderson, and Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane

Unable to Attend: Adrian Ford III, Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane

Also in Attendance: Charlotte Davis (RMC), Cricket Goodall (MHBA), Chris Merz (MRC, Stone Slade, Peggy Morgan, Al Matrinez, Myles Monroe (MDA), Amy Phillips, Harrison Palmer, Dr. Jennifer Trout, Laura Hanna, Ellen James, Gina Maybee, Tom Lamarra, Susanne Richards, Jane Seigler, Laura Lane Unsworth, Trish Brown, Rachel Jones, Sandy Turner, Susie Husk, Kim Egan, Jeff Newman, Quinn Reed, Neila Agate, Cindy Harris, Sue Harrada,

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Secretary Kevin Atticks welcomed attendees and provided a high-level overview of **Governor Moore's new Executive Order directing the creation of a comprehensive Maryland Horse Industry Strategic Plan.**

Sec'y Atticks reviewed key updates on the Strategic Plan, noting that the administration is fully engaged, with five Cabinet agencies and the Governor's Office formally involved. The Plan is designed to elevate Maryland's entire equine ecosystem by strengthening the state as a place to own, train, board, care for, and enjoy horses, especially as peer states increase their investments in equine infrastructure. Discussion emphasized that long-term sustainability requires addressing foundational workforce, veterinary, infrastructure, and land-use challenges rather than focusing solely on high-visibility projects. The Executive Order establishes a sector-based Steering Committee, broader Advisory Committees and listening sessions for stakeholder input, and a third-party facilitator responsible for research and drafting. The goal is to produce a draft plan by September 2026, with ongoing public updates throughout the process.

2. Strategic Plan Process Overview

Cassie Shirk noted Anne Litz and Chris Merz's leadership in building the framework, researching other states' studies, and staffing the initiative. Steering Committee members will represent industry sectors (e.g., breeding, racing, recreation, health/welfare, education/workforce), not specific organizations. There will be multiple avenues for participation, including town hall-style advisory meetings. A public comment Google Form is available for suggestions and solutions; linked on MHIB and Racing Commission websites. The process will prioritize transparency, with all notes and documents posted online as the work progresses. Links and notes will be posted to the MRC and MHIB websites to be shared.

Questions were raised by attendees:

How is this new Strategic Plan different from the Maryland Horse Forum report?

The Horse Forum was valuable but not run by an independent facilitator. This new effort is professionally led, more structured, and intended to be the first step toward additional studies and long-term planning. It builds on past work, including the Forum, but is designed to go deeper, incorporate new technologies and expertise, and create a unified direction for the full industry.

What does “sector representative” mean?

Sector representatives speak for broad parts of the industry—such as breeding, racing, recreation, economic development, health/welfare, or education/workforce—rather than representing specific organizations or events. This avoids bias toward any one group and keeps the Steering Committee focused on statewide priorities instead of individual interests.

Will government agencies also participate?

Yes. Four to five Cabinet agencies will appoint designees to the Steering Committee to ensure alignment across state government.

Will this include input from people on the ground—like lesson barns, boarding barns, or event organizers?

Absolutely. In addition to the Steering Committee, there will be advisory committees and town hall-style sessions specifically designed to gather input from everyday owners, operators, managers, competitors, and others across all sectors. The goal is to reach people at every level, including those who are struggling or facing challenges.

How will different perspectives—large events, competitors, facility managers—be balanced?

The structure intentionally separates "sectors" from "organizations" so that feedback comes from multiple angles. Organizers, competitors, site managers, and others will all have opportunities to contribute, ensuring a more complete picture of needs across disciplines and regions.

Anne emphasized the importance of rebuilding a culture where the industry talks with each other rather than at each other. Maryland has always been strongest when its diverse horse community works collaboratively, and the hope is that this Strategic Plan process will help restore that unity, keeping the focus on the horse and on Maryland's identity as a true horse state.

French Delegation Youth & Education Exchange Update

Amy Phillips, Oldfields School

Amy, Director of Riding at Oldfields School, provided an update on the recent visit from two representatives of MFR Rollancourt in France. She highlighted Oldfields' enthusiasm for supporting youth involvement in the upcoming study and noted that their students are ready to assist with surveys and related work. The French delegation spent a full day and part of a second day on campus, meeting students, touring facilities, observing a clinic, and exploring Maryland horse country. The visit revealed strong similarities between programs and exciting opportunities for collaboration, including a potential student exchange supported through the sister-state partnership. Amy also thanked Anne Litz for participating in a live Plaid Horse podcast during the busy delegation week, noting her excellent representation of the Maryland Horse Industry Board. The group looks forward to continued partnership and next steps toward formalizing the exchange initiative.

International Marketing & Equine Genetics

Stone Slade, MDA International Marketing

Stone Slade, Director of International Marketing at the Maryland Department of Agriculture, presented an overview of a Maryland equine genetics promotion held in Germany this summer. In partnership with Harris Paint Horses of Caroline County, Maryland exhibited at EuroPaint—the largest paint horse show outside the U.S.—to showcase the strength of Maryland-bred genetics. The project, funded through the U.S. Livestock Genetics Export (USLGE) program, featured Maryland-branded marketing materials, a breeder seminar led by Cindy Harris, and outreach to potential buyers from across Europe. The team engaged hundreds of attendees, collected 44 new industry contacts, connected with 12 existing importers, and anticipates increased exports as a result. Stone invited stakeholders to share ideas for future international genetics projects and remains available for collaboration.

6. Legislative & Regulatory Updates

Speaker: Rachel Jones, MDA Government Affairs

Rachel Jones provided an overview of upcoming legislative activity, noting that the Department's sole sponsored bill this session will extend the Maryland Horse Industry Board's statutory authority for another ten years to prevent its 2026 sunset. She also highlighted proposed legislation from the Department of Labor to ban the slaughter of racehorses and racehorse breeding stock for human or animal consumption, with clarifications underway regarding exemptions for rendering. Additional bills expected this session include PFAS phase-out measures, two veterinary-related bills—one allowing licensed veterinarians from other states to practice in Maryland without relicensure and another protecting veterinarians who recommend

medical cannabis—and a Department of Health bill creating an on-farm food service license for agritourism operations. When asked about opportunities for increasing MHIB funding, Rachel explained that current budget constraints make such requests unlikely this year. She encouraged members to route any further questions through Anne for follow-up.

Stable Licensing & Inspector Reports

Stable renewals nearly complete; certified late letters issued. The ten stables had still not renewed their licenses or notified the Board of closure; certified late-fee notices have been issued, with potential referral to collections if renewal is not completed

Peggy Morgan provided an inspection update, noting several new or relocated stables, including DMV Sport Horses' move to Wicomico County and activity at Willow Pond Farm in Somerset. She also inspected De Novo Farm, where minor safety and maintenance concerns—such as weeds, an unsecured gate, and fencing issues—are being addressed; horses at the facility are in good condition, and the operator is currently undergoing medical treatment. Additional inspections included Black Hawk Equine, which is running a strong operation and housing several paint horses from Cindy Harris. Overall, stables were found to be in good standing, with only a few license postings outstanding and no significant welfare issues observed.

Ellen James Ellen reported four new stable inspections, including two small therapy barns operated by licensed therapists or social workers, both of which met requirements after minor follow-up. She also completed inspections at 4B Farm LLC, a large Carroll County boarding and training facility that offers both Western and English programs and has now successfully obtained its long-pending license, and at Savage River Farms, a small, well-run rescue operation in a remote area. Ellen also provided an update on Painted Horse Ranch, noting that a chronically underweight horse was evaluated by a veterinarian and found to have Cushing's disease and significant dental loss. The horse has since been moved to Days End Farm for ongoing care and assessment

Sheila Curry reported that the Grants Committee will meet on Dec. 9th and there will not be a Board Meeting in December. MHIB received 56 grants totaling \$95,000 request.

8. French Veterinary Panel Recap

Dr. Kathleen Anderson gave a report on the French Veterinary Panel and praised its high-quality speakers and strong content. Although attendance from horsemen was lighter than hoped, the session was considered highly successful and worth repeating in the future. Appreciation was expressed to the Secretary of State's Office and to Sheila Curry for their roles in organizing and elevating the event. A written report will be shared once finalized, and the recording—currently saved to a hard drive—may be made available pending editing assistance, which Neil Agate volunteered to handle.

Horse Park System Update

Connie Sawyer reported that the Maryland Horse Park System brand, website, and identity are now officially launched. The Board is looking for long-term long-term funding and maintenance in the future. Connie looks forward to future expansion.

Partner & Venue Updates

Washington International Horse Show – Prince George’s Equestrian Center

Sue Harada provided a positive update on the Washington International Horse Show at the Prince George’s Equestrian Center, noting that the event was highly successful and benefited from strong participation by partners across the Maryland horse community. Several groups hosted events on-site—including the MHIB veterinary panel, a Prince George’s County town hall, and the Maryland Horse Council’s first in-person board meeting since COVID—adding visibility and momentum. Two of the three ticketed evenings sold out, with strong attendance during free daytime sessions as well. While ongoing challenges remain—particularly food service and limited funding—improvements in local lodging and facilities were well received. Thursday’s lower attendance was attributed to the federal government shutdown affecting military ticket distribution, but overall the show was considered a major success, and Sue expressed appreciation for the broad support that contributed to it.

Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill

Jeff Newman reported that the Maryland 5 Star had a strong operational and production year, with overall attendance holding steady despite the impact of the federal government shutdown in a region heavily affected by furloughs. The event drew just over 32,000 attendees on ticketed days—and nearly 35,000 including Wednesday—which matched the prior year’s numbers. A major highlight was the historic win by a Swiss rider, generating significant international media coverage. Jeff noted that continued funding will be essential for sustaining and promoting the event, emphasizing the importance of future grant opportunities to support marketing and advertising for such a large-scale production. ~32,000 spectators; strong international media; steady year-over-year numbers despite government shutdown.

Maryland Horse Library and Education Center

The Maryland Horse Library & Education Center reported a full and busy schedule, with ongoing work to revamp the career program in collaboration with Anne, Amy, and Jen. Upcoming activities include hosting authors for book signings during the Equus Film Festival in Pikesville and continuing the Bender Series, with the next session on November 20 featuring a horse dentist and a program on biting and bridling. The center remains

active with frequent events and community engagement opportunities, and attendees were encouraged to participate in the film festival and upcoming programs.

Racing Sector Updates – Thoroughbred & Standardbred

Tom Lamar reported **Laurel Park handle up 30–40%** in October despite fewer race days.

Kathy Anderson reported that stall prototypes for the new Pimlico stabling area were reviewed by horsemen at Laurel, with positive engagement. She noted continued strong momentum at the Maryland Jockey Club, highlighted by a successful Maryland Million and growing public interest driven by creative themed race days at Laurel. Tom added that, according to the Racing Commission, Laurel's wagering handle in October increased by 30–40% despite hosting five fewer race days than the previous year—an encouraging sign of progress. Committee meetings, including grants, welfare, website updates, and health, will be scheduled as needed following a very busy fall.

Preakness Festival Horse Farm tour talks for 2026 have started, with hiring a coordinator and potentially adding a second day.

Organized Shows & Events: Sheila Curry: covered all her updates above

Trade & Support Industries: Connie Sawyer: Encourages everyone to visit the Horse Park System Website and champions a great October Horse Month

Humane Societies: Erin Ochoa: Reported that welfare cases continue to come in at a normal rate and that ECI training classes remain full—an encouraging sign of industry stability and animal control agency engagement. She also provided an update on the Owner-to-Owner program (formerly METS), which supports horse owners needing help with placement or financial challenges to ensure safe, humane outcomes. While the program has been steady, the past month brought a notable increase in requests for financial assistance, particularly for veterinary care and euthanasia, reflecting current economic pressures. Erin confirmed that owners struggling due to the federal shutdown can also be referred to resources such as Gentle Giants and the Maryland Fund for Horses. She thanked the board for its ongoing collaboration.

MSA: Cassie Shirk: Cassie shared an update on the Farm Journal Foundation's rural veterinarian shortage study, noting that many board members participated in the earlier call and provided valuable follow-up information. The foundation is now analyzing the data and finalizing its findings, with a more detailed update expected for the January meeting. Anne thanked Cassie for her continued leadership and significant role in advancing the strategic plan.

Standardbred Sector: Lisa Watts: She thanked everyone who attended the Potomac Pace at Rosecroft on November 2, noting a strong turnout and the success of behind-the-

scenes experiences coordinated with the Maryland Horse Council and Cloverleaf Horsemen—an element they may continue in future years. She highlighted author Amber Sawyer's on-track book signing and her donation of signed copies to the Maryland Horse Library, along with replay features of the horse featured in her first book. Racing dates for 2026 have been approved, with Rosecroft set for 65 days and Ocean Downs continuing at 48. Lisa also shared excitement about Bojangles, a standout undefeated pacer with Maryland ownership ties. Finally, she announced plans to revive the Maryland Showcase of Champions—bringing all sire stake finals together on one day—scheduled for October 11, 2026, creating a major racing weekend aligned with Maryland Million.

Trails & Recreational Riding: Jennifer Sulin : Shared that fall has been an active season for Maryland's trail riding community, with many groups working to clear and maintain trails and hosting educational gatherings such as the Barn Banter Club's monthly programs. She recently presented the economic impact of recreational horseback riding—using data from MHIB-funded surveys—at the DNR Outdoor Summit, where the information was well received and generated thoughtful discussion about improving trail-user relationships among riders, cyclists, hikers, and others. She will deliver the same presentation at the upcoming Rural Summit in Annapolis, continuing outreach to raise awareness of equestrian recreation and promote shared stewardship of public lands.

Licensed Veterinarians: Dr. Kathleen Anderson : Dr. Anderson highlighted several promising developments related to strengthening Maryland's veterinary workforce. She noted growing national and statewide focus on recruiting and training the next generation of equine veterinarians, including the Farm Journal Foundation's rural veterinary shortage study, from which Maryland hopes to gain meaningful solutions. She welcomed the news of proposed interstate licensing reciprocity, which would ease the cumbersome process for veterinarians relocating to Maryland. She also shared an update on the emerging Maryland Eastern Shore School of Veterinary Medicine, led by inaugural dean Dr. Stanley Robertson. The new program will offer an innovative year-round, three-year curriculum designed to address shortages in large-animal and rural practice by partnering closely with practicing veterinarians for hands-on clinical training. Dr. Anderson expressed enthusiasm for this model, already in use in other states, and suggested inviting Dr. Robertson to brief the board at a future meeting.

Thoroughbred Sector: Jenile Tapscott: Will keep us posted on Pimlico Stalls and updates as they come in. , the Commission approved 120 racing days for Maryland next year.

Equine Academic Community: Dr Amy Burk

Dr. Burk shared several major updates from the University of Maryland, expressing strong support for inviting Dean Stanley Robertson to brief the board on the new Maryland Eastern Shore School of Veterinary Medicine, which aims to create 100 seats—50 reserved for Maryland students—significantly expanding in-state veterinary training capacity. She

announced that the university has launched a \$2.5 billion “Fearless” campaign, with the campus farm included as a priority project. Planning has begun to modernize the four-acre teaching farm into a “Farm of the Future Technology and Innovation Complex,” which would relocate horses to a new equestrian center anticipated to come online around 2027. Dr. Burk also reported continued collaboration on the Bender Series and the redevelopment of a more comprehensive Maryland Horse Career Program, with a meeting scheduled for November 20. Recent student field trips to Wardaca, Chance Land, and Days End Rescue sparked strong interest in internships and career advising. She highlighted rapid growth in student equine clubs, including thriving men’s and women’s polo teams, an eventing team, and an equestrian team, and announced that an equine minor has been approved by her department and will move forward for college-level approval in January.

MD Horse Council: Carolyn Mackintosh: nothing to report

Licensed Stables: Adrian Ford III – not able to attend

At Large: Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane: – not able to attend

Dr. Burk and Jenile Tapscott expressed significant concerns about the proposed stall prototypes for the new racetrack, noting that the temporary, modular structures lacked basic welfare and safety features such as appropriate materials, secure bucket and tie locations, and long-term durability. Several emphasized that the designs resembled short-term show stalls rather than permanent barns intended to last 20–30 years. Participants noted that the architectural firm, while strong in design, may not fully understand the practical needs of horses, horsemen, and multi-use facilities. The Horsemen’s group has already compiled detailed feedback and solutions, which have been submitted to the Maryland Stadium Authority, and the Facilities Committee is working to ensure the plans are reconsidered. Members stressed the need to “get this right” and ensure the final designs prioritize functionality, welfare, and operational needs, while also avoiding the perception that horsemen are merely objecting rather than advocating for safe, workable infrastructure.

Jennifer Sulin brought up wanting to start the Urban Equine Outreach group, she offered to lead it to see what existing for outreach into the city. Jennifer will meet with Anne to set up a time for the committee to convene and meet. Lisa Watts, Sheila Curry, City Ranch, Fultons, Alexandria Liu, Shuster Group were suggested to join the committee.

Susanne Richards of the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation provided an update on the draft Equine Pathway Standards, which outline what students should learn across courses such as Agriculture Science I and II, Equine Health and Management, and

Advanced Equine Veterinary and Farrier Science. The standards align with nationally recognized certifications—including NAVTA’s Approved Veterinary Assistant and the American Farrier’s Association Certified Farrier designation—though the AVA certification will not be offered in Maryland programs at this time due to regulatory requirements. She emphasized that this is a pre-public feedback stage and invited a small group of 3–5 reviewers to provide initial comments before the document is released for full public review. The goal is to ensure the pathway reflects industry needs and prepares students for careers in Maryland’s horse industry. Susanne expressed appreciation for the strong interest in supporting this work, including helping students gain practical experience with horses and equine facilities

17. Upcoming Events / Announcements

- Equus Film Festival & author events at the Maryland Horse Library.
- Bender Educational Series program on equine dentistry (Nov 20).
- Continued planning for expanded **Preakness Horse Farm Tours** in 2025.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 11:37 AM by Jenile Tapscott. second Amy Burk. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Litz, Executive Director

ADDENDUM on Request: Peggy Morgan/Ellen James Stable Reports