

MARYLAND HORSE INDUSTRY BOARD
Minutes of the Realignment Board Meeting
Tuesday, March 13th 18th, 10am 2025
Meeting in person at Maryland Department of Agriculture

Meeting held in Person at the Maryland Department of Agriculture
The meeting started at 10:06 AM

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

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

Also in Attendance: Kevin Atticks MDA Secretary of Agriculture, Cassie Shirk, MDA , Assistant Secretary, Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, Justin Hays, Deputy Principal Counsel, Ellen James & Peggy Morgan Stable Inspectors, Anne Litz

Call to Order: Sheila Curry (Chr.) called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

- I. **Welcome:** Kevin Atticks MDA Secretary of Agriculture emphasized the importance of the board as an extension of the Department of Agriculture, serving as a liaison between the horse industry and the state. Board members are expected to provide insight on industry trends, challenges, and opportunities. A key concern discussed was the future of horse racing and its impact on the broader equine industry. The industry is currently facing financial challenges, with the state's budget under strain. The Preakness rebuild was cited as a significant investment, and the potential consequences of racing's decline were discussed, including the loss of related businesses and services. Secretary Atticks stressed the need for a strategic, statewide approach to support the equine industry, referencing efforts in other states like Virginia and Kentucky. The board was urged to think broadly, provide advice, and help shape policy to ensure the industry's growth rather than decline. Additionally, collaboration across different equestrian sectors—despite individual differences—was encouraged to strengthen the industry as a whole. There is strong political interest in the Preakness and equine investments, creating an opportunity for the board to position itself as a leading voice on horse-related matters in the state. Secretary Atticks encouraged board members and members of the horse industry, to set aside personal biases and sector-specific interests while serving in their official capacity. Instead, they should focus on strengthening and growing Maryland's entire horse industry. He expressed the need for innovative ideas beyond traditional funding mechanisms like breeding incentives and purse accounts. Secretary Atticks is looking to Maryland to lead the way, and outthink other states. Despite a challenging financial environment, funding will be allocated somewhere, and the board should actively position itself to benefit from available resources.

Board members were urged to consider broader strategies, such as legislative changes, incentives, and cultural shifts to grow engagement with horses. The industry is significant, even if many within it do not see it as such, and creative solutions are needed to sustain and expand it.

Secretary Atticks called on the board to provide actionable recommendations for advancing Maryland's equine industry.

Dr. Kathleen Anderson spoke to the growth she has seen in Kentucky, especially in their growth through horse awareness and farm tours, the horse Park Museum, and encouraging the preservation of open space.

Secretary Atticks responded favorably and encouraged the board to get people into open space and to horses. He spoke about his history with agrotourism and encouragement for horse people to think along those lines.

Connie Swayer suggested shifting the perspective of the horse industry to align more closely with the sports industry rather than solely focusing on agriculture. Unlike other agricultural sectors, equine activities function as both a sport and an industry, and the broader sports industry is experiencing growth. The discussion highlighted the increasing role of virtual betting and digital engagement in racing, which the industry must adapt to.

She emphasized the idea of multi-use, multi-discipline facilities - such as ways to transform Rosecroft into a year-round equestrian sports hub. Similarly, the redevelopment of Pimlico should focus on accommodating a variety of horse-related events rather than being a single-purpose venue. And making these venues like a small village so people stay and spend time and money, plus connect.

Additionally, Connie stated that the veterinarians within the industry should be viewed as sports medicine professionals, reflecting the connection between equine care and human sports science. This could lead to new growth opportunities and revenue streams, ensuring long-term sustainability. She also encouraged finding a western location for a Pillar in the Horse Park System in the future. And the lack of use of Fair Hill Special Event Zone which could be used for so much more.

Sheila Curry asked for help from the Secretary to get in the rooms with construction teams that are building Pimlico and have an equestrian consultant on hand from different parts of the horse industry. Make all horse venues, multiuse facilities to help make usage less expensive.

Dr. Amy Burk spoke to the need for welfare for horses and humans at all these new facilities.

Carolyn Mackintosh spoke about the program in Ocala to get children reading horse books and leading there they can visit horses. She also spoke about her strong leadership with volunteers and expanding that to all of Maryland.

Jennifer Sulin spoke about LGBTQA programs and other outreach including girl scouts.

Lisa Watts spoke about the state police at Rosecroft and youth organizations plus the scouts in America to come into Rosecroft and do hands on projects like a museum.

Anne Litz, The Executive Director highlighted Secretary Attick's past leadership in shaping Horse Industry Day, emphasizing his expertise in messaging despite not being a horse person. A key takeaway was the importance of consistent and positive messaging when engaging with new leadership groups unfamiliar with the horse industry. Anne cautioned against negative or demanding approaches, as they can lead decision-makers to disengage, which has happened in the past. Instead, the board should follow Secretary Attick's example in communicating effectively and constructively.

- II. **Board Members each identified their role on the Board:**
- a. For Organized Shows and Competitions: Sheila Curry - Chair
 - b. For the Academic Equine Community Dr. Amy Burk - Vice Chair
 - c. For the Thoroughbred Industry: Jenile Tapscott
 - d. For Animal Control and Humane Societies: Erin Ochoa
 - e. For Equine Veterinarians: Dr. Kathleen Anderson, DVM
 - f. For Trails and Recreational Riding: Jennifer Sulin
 - g. For the Maryland Standardbred Industry: Lisa Watts
 - h. For The Equine Support Industries: Connie Sawyer
 - i. For the Maryland Horse Council: Carolyn Mackintosh
- Stable Inspectors Ellen James and Peggy Morgan

III. **Cassie Shirk, MDA Assistant Secretary's portfolio**

- a. One of the assistant secretaries here at the Department of Agriculture and the Maryland horse industry board is one of the many programs that she oversees in her portfolio, including the vet board, and, marketing animal industries, animal health program, state veterinarian, and then our consumer protection programs, Weights and Measures.

IV. **Government Relations & being an MHIB Board Member:**

Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations

Rachel outlined her role in advocating for policies that support all of Maryland agriculture, including the equine industry. She talked about the importance of a comprehensive perspective from the board to advise the Secretary, Governor, and legislative process without favoring specific industry sectors. During the 90-day Maryland legislative session (January–April), the board may be called upon to review and provide guidance on legislative proposals. Emergency meetings may be convened to discuss urgent matters. One such bill, House Bill 162, would have required licensing of horse breeders but was withdrawn due to lack of specificity. However, the bill is expected to return in a revised form, and legislators plan to consult with the board over the summer.

Rachel stressed that any new regulations would require clear enforcement mechanisms, not just registration fees. Additionally, policymakers frequently compare Maryland's equine industry to Kentucky, making it essential to assess how similar regulations might impact Maryland's competitive position. Board members were encouraged to be prepared for ongoing discussions and to provide insights on best practices and potential policy impacts for future legislative decisions. Rachel then discussion covered the process of determining the agency's position on a bill. The speaker explained that while their role involves negotiating with legislators, they may not always be permitted to take a stance. In this specific case, the board initially voted to oppose the bill as drafted but could have reconsidered if amendments provided more clarity.

Additionally, for the agency to formally support a bill, Rachel must justify the position to the governor's office, aligning with the broader administration's stance.

Rachel spoke to the importance of ongoing communication during the legislative session (January–April) and expressed eagerness to collaborate.

Clarification on acting as a Board member and as Private Citizen:

- Stay Aligned with the Administration – As a board member, MHIB Board Members represent the Moore administration and should not publicly oppose its positions or policies.

Differentiate Between Personal and Official Opinions – When expressing personal views, especially in public or policy discussions, clearly state that you are speaking as a private citizen, not as a board representative.

- Use Disclaimers in Conversations – If discussing a policy or bill in a public setting where people recognize your board affiliation, clarify that your opinions are personal and not the board's stance.

- Testify as a Private Citizen – If you wish to support or oppose legislation (e.g., a Sunday hunting bill), do so without mentioning your board membership to avoid misrepresenting the board's official position.

- Understand Your Dual Role – While you have autonomy as a private citizen, your role as a board member ties you to the MDA and Moore administration, requiring careful navigation of public statements and advocacy efforts.

V. MHIB Statute & Bylaws—Justin Hays, Deputy Principal Counsel

Justin explained that he and his colleagues, are legal generalists handling a wide range of issues rather than specialists in specific statutes under the Maryland Department of Agriculture. They emphasize the importance of revisiting legal texts regularly to ensure accuracy in their work. While enforcement options exist, such as injunctions and civil penalties, the board's authority is limited to specific activities outlined by law. Issues outside their jurisdiction, such as private horse ownership without commercial activities, fall under County Animal Control. There was discussion about potential legislative expansion into breeding regulations, but the Justin notes the board must operate within its current statutory limitations. He encouraged board members to review relevant statutes and regulations for clarity and reiterate their availability for legal questions.

Dr Amy Burk asked how challenging it would be to expand our board composition to more members? To add a Youth and Therapeutic Member.

Justin Hayes explained the statute is pretty clear about the makeup of the board, and that would have to be a change in the bill and to discuss this with Rachel before the next session.

Board's Jurisdiction when it comes to Licensed Stables.

Justin explained the board's jurisdiction is strictly defined by the Maryland General Assembly's statute. If someone reports horse neglect, but the situation falls outside the definition of a horse establishment, the board cannot intervene. In such cases, they advise concerned individuals to contact their local legislator if they wish to advocate for expanding the board's authority. Until then, the board must operate within its current legal limitations.

VI. Inspections & Licensed Stables—Ellen James & Peggy Morgan Stable Inspectors

Ellen James discussed the board's primary focus is on the safety and health of horses, with most regulations tied to these concerns. Inspections include checking horses' conditions, ensuring lesson horses are sound, and evaluating tack and equipment for cleanliness and functionality. They also assess farm environments for hazards that could endanger both horses and people. Additionally, Ellen explained that while inspectors do not vote at board meetings, they serve as the board's representatives during farm inspections. They collect valuable information and are available to answer questions or gather details on specific issues upon request.

Peggy Morgan explains the stable inspection process, detailing how they assess compliance using ratings such as compliant, needs improvement, non-compliant, or not applicable. Common issues

requiring improvement include outdated licenses or excessive manure accumulation. Inspections cover various aspects, including stable conditions, veterinarian and farrier information, first aid kits, feed quality and storage, stall conditions, and cleanliness of equipment and tack. Inspectors also check for proper manure management and help farm owners access grants for waste disposal solutions. They provide guidance on nutrient management and other regulatory requirements while engaging with farm animals and offering practical support where needed.

MHIB's Stable inspectors routinely work with Animal Control and organizations like Nutrient Management when needed.

Executive Director explained that MHIB inspects all complaints received that fall under MHIB jurisdiction. Inspectors recommended that the more proof and specifics provided the better since it is hearsay concept without proof and even on an inspection, they might not see what the complainant saw on a given day. Justin Hayes confirmed the need for evidence we do need in order to either get an injunction or a civil penalty would need to be pretty concrete evidence. Such as dated photos.

Ellen and Peggy explained their goal as inspectors is to bring peoples level of education of horse care up and to get stables in compliance. In order for a stable to be inspected they must be licensed or have applied for a license.

VII. Review of Board Realignment Survey

- a. Strategic Plan Summary for next Board Meeting
- b. Board Reporting. MHIB asks that Board Members report on the overall section of the industry to the best of their ability and to mention anything of Note.

VIII. MHIB Ongoing and Current Projects

- a. Growing Licensed Stable Network
- b. MD Horse Park System: commissioned studies 2004, 2012, 2015 and now Launching the Horse Park System in 2025
- c. Maryland Horse Farm Tour/Preakness Festival & Fall Horse Farm Tour
- d. Horse Discovery Center Network
- e. Horseland at State Fair
- f. MD Horse Forum: held every 5 years
- g. 2024 American Horse Council economic impact studies
- h. International Involvement: MD Sister States, USLGE grants exchange trips in talks, Working the Secretary of State, Embassy Night at WIHS and Preakness
- i. MHIB Grants Program \$30,000
- j. MTCP_ Maryland Thoroughbred Career Program – 2026 Maryland Horse Industry Career Program addition
- k. Trails Brochures & Partnership with DNR

IX. MHIB Bylaws – The MHIB Strategic Planning Committee will focus on updating the Bylaws this year.

X. Committees Setting the Focus of Each

Executive Director Anne Litz spoke of the need to strengthen board committees to ensure efficiency and productivity. Committees should be purposeful, with no more than five board members to avoid quorum issues. They encourage members to focus on reporting industry-wide updates rather than personal interests and suggest forming new committees only if necessary. Additionally, Anne suggested bringing in advisory members to support the board's work.

XI. 2025 Committees

1. **Health Advisory Committee:** This committee is comprised mostly of equine veterinarians who meet bi-annually to discuss horse health issues. Dr. Kathleen Anderson(Chair), Carolyn

Mackintosh, Adrien Ford III, Dr. Amy Burk. Sheila Curry (ad hoc) Representatives include: MHIB—Licensed Veterinarians, MD Racing Commission, Equine Academic Community, Racetrack Veterinarian, MHIB/License Stables, MD Horse Council, MD Veterinary Medical Association, USDA/APHIS, VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, MDA—Office of the State Veterinarian and others as suggested by the Chair. Met March, 13th 2025

2. **Marketing Committee:** The Marketing Committee is responsible for advancing the initiatives of the Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) by promoting awareness, engagement, and growth within the state's equine industry. Comprised of MHIB members and a diverse group of representatives from across the state, the committee convenes as needed to develop and implement marketing strategies, foster partnerships, and support programs that enhance the visibility and impact of MHIB's mission. Connie Sawyer (Chair), Erin Ochoa, Lisa Watts, Carolyn Mackintosh, Sheila Curry (ad hoc)
3. **Budget Review Committee:** Comprised of three MHIB members only, they meet with the Executive Director on an as-needs basis to discuss the operating budget and set monetary priorities for MHIB initiatives. Lisa Watts (Chair), Jennifer Sulin, Dr. Amy Burk Sheila Curry (ad hoc)
4. **Strategic Planning Committee:** This committee is responsible for guiding the Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB) in setting priorities and defining long-term objectives. Comprised of MHIB members, the committee evaluates industry needs, assesses opportunities, and makes recommendations to the Board on strategic initiatives to pursue and support throughout the year. Through careful planning and alignment with MHIB's mission, the committee ensures that the Board's efforts are focused, effective, and impactful. Genevieve Mcfarlane (Chair), Connie Sawyer, Lisa Watts
5. **Grants Committee:** Once a year, the grants group meets to assess annual grants applications and make recommendations to the board about who will receive MHIB grant monies. Lisa Watts (Chair) Dr. Amy Burk, Dr. Kathleen Anderson
6. **Equine Welfare Committee:** This committee, which includes MHIB members, is responsible for promoting and ensuring the humane treatment, health, and overall well-being of horses within its jurisdiction. Erin Ochoa (Chair) Jenile Tapscott, Jennifer Sulin,
7. **Performance Horse Committee:** This committee which includes MHIB members helps promote performance horses of all disciplines and their careers in Maryland. Jennifer Sulin (Chair), Connie Sawyer, Carolyn Mackintosh, Lisa Watts
8. **Nominating Committee:** This committee meets as needed to elect board chairs.
9. **Horse Forum Committee:** The Maryland Horse Forum serves as a day, every five (5) years, to hear from the entire Maryland Horse Industry. The Horse Board invited you to share your thoughts and solutions to current Industry concerns.. Dr. Amy Burk (Chair)
10. **Horse Discovery Centers Program:** This committee consists of two board members and inspectors to inspect and oversee the approval of new HDCs and review of yearling HDC reports and meetings.
11. **Horseland Committee:** This committee is overseen by the MHIB Executive Director and is responsible for running Horseland at the Maryland State Fair.

XII. Advisory Board

Purpose/Duties to be discussed at a later dtey and revised to support the current goals of the Horse Industry

XIII. No Public Comment

MEETING ADJOURNED at 12:09 PM
Respectfully submitted,
Anne Litz, Executive Director