

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board  
Meeting Date: Thursday, August 14, 2025  
Generated by Lisa Ledman  
approved December 11, 2025

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:00 PM

## 2. ROLL CALL

### A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, Sydney Garner, James Moore, Jeff Pharis, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

### B. Welcome Guests

Sydney Garner, St. Mary's County Economic Development  
Emily Lacey, St. Mary's County Economic Development  
Lisa Ledman, St. Mary's County Economic Development  
Katrine Heuer, St. Mary's County Economic Development  
Viv Marrek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust  
Joan Bearden, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau  
Sabrina Dobbins, Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission

### C. Approval of the June 12, 2025 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from June 12, 2025 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Bonnie Brown, second Justin Cheseldine-Gass

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, James Moore, Jeff Pharis, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

## 3. PRESENTATION

There were no presentations this month.

## 4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board met at the conclusion of the Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting and voted on the following motions.

I move to approve the Unrestricted Lot Request for the Tennyson Easement (MALPF File # 18-17-28.)

Motion by Stephen Reeves, second Joseph Wood

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

I move to approve the Unrestricted Lot Request for the Abell Easement (MALPF File # 18-21-01.)

Motion by Stephen Reeves, second Joseph Wood

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

I move to approve the Farm Use Solar Request for the Braun Easement (MALPF File # 18-06-15.)

Motion by Stephen Reeves, second Joseph Wood

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

#### B. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership includes Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood.

No update at this time.

### 5. OLD BUSINESS

#### A. Agriculture Updates

Sydney Garner updated the Board about the St. Mary's County 5-Year Agriculture Tax Credit Program which allows participants to receive tax credit on the County portion of their property tax bill for their agriculturally assessed land and farm buildings. This program requires a 5-year commitment to not subdivide or build residentially their property. After five years they can renew or dissolve their agreement. If they do not fulfill the five-year commitment, they must repay the credited taxes plus interest and penalties. For FY26 there were 135 participating properties totaling 15,371.92 acres and \$50,115.39 in credits were issued.

#### B. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Justin Cheseldine-Gass informed the Board of his participation with the Maryland Department of Agriculture attending the International Inbound Conference in Hong Kong & Mylasia. The hope is to create an International Market for the blue catfish.

Mr. Cheseldine-Gass also updated the Board that Blue Catfisheries is working with the Land Use and Growth Management Department to get approval for a processing plan in St. Mary's County.

#### C. Forestry Updates

No updates at this time.

#### D. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

There was a question from the Board about the differences between the MALPF and Rural Legacy programs and their easements. Lisa Ledman explained that MALPF was administered through the Maryland Department of Agriculture to protect prime farmland. Rural Legacy is administered through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to protect environmentally sensitive land.

#### E. Rural Legacy

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – No update.

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek stated that PTLT currently has 4 easements under Maryland Department of Natural Resources & Navy/REPI review totaling 470 acres. The hope is to settle on these easements before the end of the year.

#### F. Farmers Markets

Emily Lacey shared that both the Home Grown Farm Market and the California Farmers Market are open Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm. The Barns at New Market Seasonal Stalls are open Mondays – Saturdays from 8 am until 5 pm and the Value-Added Building is open Saturdays from 9 am until 3 pm.

Joeseeph Wood questioned building a permanent location for the California Farmers Market. Lisa Ledman shared that the Commissioners of St. Mary's County have removed this project from the Capital Improvement Budget and the current market vendors do not want to move.

## 6. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Board Member Open Comment Period

Joseph Wood would like to request that the University of Maryland Extension do a study on solar systems and farming operations similar to a study that was completed in New Jersey. Scott Bacon questioned what is the size of a solar array allowed in the Rural Preservation District (RPD).

Information about an upcoming Drones in Agriculture Workshop was shared with the Board.

### B. Partner Updates

Joan Beareden shared that Farm Bureau is soliciting legislative proposals.

## 7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the August 14, 2025 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting.

Motion by Stephen Reeves, second by James Moore

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Bonnie Browne, Justine Cheseldine-Gass, James Moore, Jeff Pharis, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood