

Approved  
9-13-24

**MONTGOMERY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING**  
July 19, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD) was held virtually on the Zoom platform and in person on Friday, July 19, 2024.

People Present:

Doug Tregoning, Chairman  
Linda Lewis, Supervisor (Virtual)  
Tom Linthicum, Supervisor  
Robert Butts, Associate Supervisor  
Chris Miller, Associate Supervisor (Virtual)  
Joe Lehman, Associate Supervisor  
Mike Scheffel (OAG)  
Sam Engler, District Conservationist (NRCS)  
John Zawitoski, District Manager (MSCD)  
Kathleen Sigwart, Resource Conservation Planner (MDA)  
Julianna Burns, Resource Conservation Planner (MDA) (Virtual)  
Karen Walker, Office Service Coordinator (MSCD)

After acknowledging all in attendance, the Chairman, Doug Tregoning called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The Chairman noted Kelly Nichols from Extension had provided everyone a written report, and John shared that Adam would not be attending the meeting. John noted Mike from the Office of Agriculture would join the meeting late.

**SECRETARY/ TREASURER'S REPORT** - The Chairman moved to begin the meeting with the adoption of the June Board Meeting Minutes. He noted all have received a copy of the minutes and asked if there were any changes or corrections. Having no changes or corrections, the Chairman requested a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and seconded by Tom Linthicum and passed approving the June 14, 2024, Board of Supervisors Minutes.

The Chairman then invited Karen to present the financial report. She noted the checkbook and bank statement have been reconciled and she shared the report for the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund was submitted on time. She said while the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund balanced shows a \$46,000 carryover into FY25, it is designated to be invoiced by the County associated with the cost share engineering position. Additionally, the June MDA report requires an original signature, and she will meet with Tim later today to sign the report once approved by the Board. She explained that the MSCD has received 3 quarterly MDA FY25 payments but the FY25 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund payment has not yet been received. Karen detailed that she is diligently preparing for the audit that will be due in October. Given that each month the bank statement and check book match, she doesn't anticipate any challenges with the audit. Karen provided an update on the progress with the Cooperators Dinner, and she explained that she has been working with Michelle from Dickerson Market. The menu for the dinner has been established and the cost will be less than last year's event. Karen has reached out to Monica from the fair and has confirmed that the MSCD was booked for September 18<sup>th</sup> and that there would be no charge. Karen shared that Laura Butz has been in the office as a NRCS Earth Team Volunteer and she has developed the flyer for the cooperators dinner and updated the MSCD display for the fair. The Chairman asked when the invitation will go out and Karen responded we usually send them out a month before the event. The invitations will be sent both electronically and snail mail. Karen reminded the Supervisors this event is to say thank you for serving on the Board and there is no cost for them and a spouse or significant others to attend. Karen said there are no donation requests but noted John would present two

expenses that are pending approval before the Board. The first expense is for the MASCD Annual dues. The current MASCD invoice for the annual dues is \$2,750.00 and John noted MDA contributes towards the expense. The other expense was for the Envirothon. John shared last year in the Board of Directors Meeting, there was a discussion for Maryland hosting the National Envirothon and a plan was developed for each district to provide four (4) \$1,500 installments to host the event. Bruce Young is the Envirothon coordinator for MASCD and he noted that only 7 Districts have contributed towards the national event so far. John shared that last fall when the first payment invoice was set to the MSCD, there was reluctance among the Board to contribute until Maryland had officially been awarded the competition. Now that Maryland is officially the host for this event, this was now the appropriate time to discuss the MSCD contribution towards this event.

John provided the financial breakdown for the National Envirothon, and it was noted not all districts participate in the Envirothon. After a lengthy discussion, the Board voted to provide the 4 installments and the Chairman noted while hosting the event is expensive, the assistance from the District is necessary. The Chairman then requested two motions to address the financial matters. The first motion was to file the June MDA Financial report. A motion was made by Tom Linthicum and seconded by Linda Lewis and passed to file the June MDA Financial Report. The second motion was to pay the MASCD annual dues and provide for the National Envirothon Event. A motion was made by Linda Lewis and seconded by Tom Linthicum and passed approving to pay \$2,750 for the MASCD Annual dues and pay the \$1,500 installment for the National Envirothon.

**DISTRICT ACTIVITIES REPORT AND PROGRAM UPDATE** – The District Conservationist, Sam Engler, presented the Activities Report. Sam shared details on the report and noted that Charlie has a lot of pond activity, as well as 13 conservation plans in progress and 6 completed conservation plans. Sam drew the Supervisors attention to this month’s engineering activities and said he would address any questions. The Chairman commented MSCD staff is diligently working and the number of completed conservation plans (47) is impressive. As a follow up on the activities report, John noted that NRCS staff: Sam, Warren and Matt worked at warp speed in getting the design approved for Randy Stabler’s waste storage structure. John shared details on the project and noted while Randy may not be the most patient cooperater, he appreciates the engineering assistance provided by the District. John also mentioned Jamison’s approval for stormwater management for their ag structure and he noted the activity associated with a new pond for Ruppert’s Nursery.

After the discussion on the activities report, Sam shared the updates for EQIP and noted the program is done for the year. For 2024, there were 28 preapproved contracts for \$1.2 million in conservation cost-share. In 2023, there were only 10 contracts for \$240,000. Everyone commented on the increase in contracts and the work MSCD staff is doing. Tom asked for the new EQIP deadline and Sam responded that has not been officially established; however, EQIP applications can be submitted any time. Sam said there will probably be an EQIP deadline in October or the end of 2024 and another EQIP deadline in the beginning of 2025.

### Agency Reports:

**OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE (OAG)**–Mike Scheffel presented the report for OAG and apologized for his late attendance. Mike’s entire report is incorporated into the minutes as follows:

- **Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Report on the status of Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) and Building Lot Termination (BLT) programs** - Throughout the course of three work sessions in June, the Planning Department presented to the Planning Board the same recommendations the department had presented to the OAG and agricultural community on how to increase the market for TDRs and BLTs through the Incentive Zoning Update. At the conclusion, the Planning Board voted in favor of presenting these recommendations to the County Council. The Planning Department stated that the recommended changes to the TDR program would require the County Council to introduce a Zoning Text Amendment.
- **ZTA 24-02, Agricultural and Rural Zones – Campground** - The public hearing for this ZTA took place on July 16 at 1:30 pm online and in person. The County’s Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee will

discuss this ZTA during their July 22 work session at 1:30 pm, which is open to the public. A second potential work session is scheduled for July 29.

- Solar projects generating over 2 MW in the Agricultural Reserve- The Chairman asked how many panels or acres is required for a 2 MW solar project and Mike responded it will take 7-10 acres. Mike shared there are two solar projects in the AR Zone: Chaberton Sugarloaf and Chaberton Ramiere. Mike said the Sugarloaf project is further along and the installer is Chaberton. Mike shared solar over 2 MW does not have to abide by zoning and the County Executive does not want solar on class 1 and 2 soils. Tom said that he has received letters about solar and the Chairman said anyone with property is getting letters from solar companies. Mike said about sixty 2 MW solar installation projects have been submitted and PSC approved 59. It is his understanding that the 1 project that did not get approved encountered some legal issues. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter, and it is yet to be determined how the state and county can meet their carbon goals.

In addition to approval from the PSC, Chaberton Solar needs to receive Mandatory Referral approval for both projects from the Montgomery County Planning Department. However, this review process cannot deny the application based on non-conformance with the County Zoning Code, but rather other regulations like the Forest Conservation Law. Chaberton's Mandatory Referral application for the Sugarloaf project was accepted by the Planning Department on July 1. The Planning Department will publish a report on this project on August 26, hold a public hearing on September 5, and submit a letter to the County Council, County Executive, and PSC on September 13. A Mandatory Referral application for the Ramiere project has not yet been received.

The PSC is also holding public hearings on these two projects. A virtual public hearing for the Sugarloaf project took place on July 10, 2024 at 7 pm. A second public hearing will take place on October 8 at 6:30 pm at the Upper Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department, 19801 Beallsville Road, Beallsville. The public may sign up to speak at the hearing by sending an email to [psc.pulj@gmail.com](mailto:psc.pulj@gmail.com) by October 7 at 12:00 pm. The live stream of the hearing will be available on the [Public Utility Law Judge Division's YouTube Channel](#). Written comments on the proposed project may be submitted electronically through the [Commission's Public Comment Dropbox](#) by October 9. All comments must include reference to Case No. 9726.

The Montgomery County Farm Bureau will submit written comments to the PSC. The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (APAB) are not allowed to submit comments to the PSC without permission from the County Executive, only to the County Council and County Executive. However, individual members of the AAC and APAB may submit comments to the PSC.

**Upcoming meetings and events:** Montgomery County Annual Farm Tour & Harvest Sale: July 27 and 28, 2024; Agricultural Leaders' Luncheon: August 12, 2024; Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors meeting: August 12, 2024 (at the fairgrounds after the Agricultural Leaders' Luncheon); Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board meeting: August 13, 2024; Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting: August 20, 2024.

After Mike presented his report, there was some discussion on FAA and drones, and it was noted that drones that are flying in the County without approval from the FAA are not legal.

## **DISTRICT MANAGERS REPORT: NEW BUSINESS**

**MASCD Meeting Highlights:** John commented on the keynote speaker presentation on the changing workforce as baby boomers retire and generation X, Millennials and Generation Z comprise the largest percentages of the workforce. The Chairman shared the need to understand the avenues available to communicate across all these generations as the preferred methods are not homogenous. This was the driving force behind Kat attending the meeting and providing training on how to use Instagram as a form of communication. John shared that baby boomers make up 10% of the workforce and Millennials are 45%. All thought the keynote speaker was good.

- **SSCC Committee on Forest Clearing:** During our Central Area Meeting, there was a discussion concerning an upcoming State Soil Conservation Committee Meeting about forming a subcommittee to review and develop Statewide guidance on clearing forests for agricultural land uses. Three District Staff members have volunteered to serve, Chris Brown – Cecil County, Quinton Cornwell, Harford County, John Z from Montgomery. Depending on the number of committee members needed, Chris Brown would be lead staffer with the other staffers serving as alternates for the committee.
- **MDA FY26 Budget Implications/District Impact** – During the Administrative Committee Meeting, Byron P. discussed MDA’s approved FY25 Budget as well as projections of a significant structural deficit heading into FY26 and beyond. For FY25, a total of 3 million dollars was reduced from the 8 million dollars approved for the conservation grants program. A total of 5 million will be available for FY25. Byron discussed the largest part of his budget is personnel and grants to Districts. The grants to districts provide operating, and cost share assistance to the DM and support staff. He indicated this will be a problem area moving forward. This would have a significant impact on District operations if funding is reduced or cut. It’s going to be bad for FY26 and even worse for FY27. Mike shared the same is true for the county the FY25 budget is okay but FY26 and beyond there are challenges. The chairman said the solution to the budget problem is to raise taxes. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter.
- **NRCS Leasing Discussion** – During the Administrative Meeting, there was also a presentation on NRCS leasing of space. The biggest takeaway from this discussion is that NRCS will no longer accept an unfunded cooperative agreement that includes space provided to NRCS at no cost. They will be requiring an official lease agreement. This will have a dramatic impact on our District operations as space provided to NRCS in our limited spaces is provided at no cost. FSA is the only federal entity that leases space from the County. Given the requirements of what must be contained in a lease, our existing spaces dedicated to NRCS will not meet lease requirements. Unless NRCS and FSA can work out a shared space agreement with the leased space from the County, I believe NRCS will look to lease space elsewhere. This would be a highly undesirable outcome. The District would lose direct connection to the federal network needed for conservation planning and engineering design development. Connection would need to be through an alternative means to connect. Current bandwidth connecting by VPN to a wireless connection would not be sufficient due to the number of simultaneous connections needed. We would also lose federal phones (most staff have a county provided phone) and we would lose our copy machine as this is provided to the District by the NRCS. Doug noted we have worked very hard to make this location a one stop shop that is a role model for the country. There was a lengthy discussion on this matter.
- **WIP 2025 and Beyond** – Districts have entered the final year of the 2025 WIP and emphasis is being placed on advancing goal gaps. Compared to the other Bay States, Maryland is ahead of the other states. Elizabeth discussed other components of the Bay clean up that are also being considered as co-benefits, such as soil health, pollinator habitat and tree plantings that provide more than water quality benefits but lead to better health of the watershed. Climate change will have an impact on future goals and steps are being taken to better understand the relation between model performance and measured reductions through field research. There is no agreement between the modeling and how the system is responding

to our efforts. One factor is that land treatments don't have an immediate response and it may take years for the system to respond to our efforts. There will be engagements with the Districts as we head into 2026 and beyond. It is anticipated the plan moving forward will look similar to the plans developed in 2018. Districts will be asked to participate in this process once again. More regional changes and climate changes will be a part of the goals.

- **MASCD Awards Banquet** –Montgomery had a very good night. Kathleen Sigwart received her “Outstanding Employee” award and Lori Larson and Laura Groat received the “Outstanding Cooperator” Award. As part of the program, the video the District produced concerning the Wyndham Oaks II operation was played and was well received. Lastly, the District has been recognized as the Farm Credit Outstanding District for this past year. It is important to note that in the past 7 years, the District has been honored twice with this recognition, and has also received 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Honorable Mention recognitions. We are very proud of these sustained recognitions among our peers with the State Association. Doug shared that John provided an outstanding video of Wyndam Oaks. John said that MSCD will be responsible for next year’s Central Registration for the conference and David Plummer is looking to visit Rocky Gap Resort as a possible location.
- **MASCD Summer Meeting 2025** – The Central Area (which our District is a part of) will be the host of the 2025 summer meeting. Over the next month, we will be working with the State Association Staff on choosing a location for this event. There was some discussion on where to host the event, particularly in the area. There are some challenges with holding the event in the area as it will have an impact on the number of rooms needing to be booked to get special rates and conference spaces. A decision on where to host must be made before the October MASCD BOD meeting.

**Ag Education Summit** - MDA Secretary – Kevin Atticks extended an invitation to the MSCD to attend an Ag Education Summit. Given Districts are heavily involving in education outreach, John and Kat attended this summit representing the MSCD. John shared there were 20 presentations, and it was noted that it was evident that the system lacks a coordinated approach. It was suggested to establish a statewide agency to coordinate agriculture education as well as to develop a program when students graduate High School, they will have accreditation or certain certifications for ag that would help them with employment opportunities. John shared the details on the challenges of having a student intern and it was noted that Future Farmers of America (FFA) are not everywhere.

**Social Media Briefing – Instagram** - The Chairman wanted to dedicate sometime during the Board meeting to discuss the different social media platforms and said the District is fortunate to have Kat on staff. John placed Kat’s presentation on the screen and Kat provided detailed instructions on how to create an Instagram account and noted how the account functions. The Chairman thanked Kat and asked if using social media would make it easier for his information to be stolen. Kat responded yes and noted it will never be safe but provided steps users can use to safeguard their information. Doug would like her to present security awareness on these platforms during another Board Meeting. All agreed it’s a good idea.

**2024 Cooperators Dinner – Initial Budget Request** - We are rapidly moving into mid-summer, and this is the time of the year we are pulling together the details involving our annual cooperator dinner. We set the Dinner Date for September 18<sup>th</sup> at our May meeting, and we selected our award program recipients during our June meeting. We have had meeting with our host and have been discussing the menu and cost estimates for providing the meal with our caterer “Dickerson Market” Karen will discuss what we are working on as well as seeking approval of an initial budget request for us to make the necessary arrangements for our dinner. We will need a motion and second and board action on the budget request. The Chairman said he trust John and directed him to use his discretion on committing District funds for the Dinner.

**New Associate Supervisor -Chris Bixler** – John shared the state soil committee wants districts to always be looking to expand and offer opportunities to be on the District Board. J Harne has been active in seeking

additional candidates to serve as associate supervisors. Understanding that succession on the Board is inevitable, having a stream of associate supervisors to pool from is critically important as a part of succession planning. Chris Bixler has indicated his interest in serving as an Associate Supervisor but was not available to attend this meeting. John provided his bio and if the Board would like he would extend an invitation to attend another board meeting. The Chairman liked the suggestion and looks forward to meeting him. Tom noted that his background would provide diversity for the board.

## **OLD Business**

**Cover Crop Sign Up** - The District has worked closely with our producers assisting them with signing up for this year's program. MDA requested producers to sign up in person and we reached out to current and past participants to assist them with enrollment and coordinating the necessary documentation to participate. Sign up ended on Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. This deadline is for both the MDA and District Commodity Cover Crop Program.

**Farm Tour and Harvest Sale July 27<sup>th</sup> and July 28<sup>th</sup>** - Just a reminder, the County's Farm Tour and Harvest Sale will be July 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. They have a record number of farms participating. The District has assisted the County in promoting this event and we also help with distributing flyers, and signage to participating farms to help the OAG.

**MC Ag Fair August 9 -17<sup>th</sup>** - Also, as a reminder, the Montgomery County Fair will be held August 9<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup>. There will not be an August meeting as the meeting will also fall on exhibit set up day (August 9<sup>th</sup>). The District and the OAG will once again be sharing an exhibit area. We are required to complete set up by noon on August 9<sup>th</sup>. We will go to the fairground early in the morning to get the exhibit set up and we will be assisting with the staffing of the exhibit all week. We have lots of nice giveaway items to promote our exhibit.

**Ag Leaders Luncheon** - Supervisors and staff should have received their invitations to attend the Ag Leaders Luncheon which will be held in the Heritage Building on August 12<sup>th</sup>. If you have not received your invitation, please let me know. You will need to respond to the RVSP for you to receive your pass to get into the fair.

### **Board Executive Session Summary from the June 14<sup>th</sup> Closed Session**

In accordance with (§ 3-306) (c) (2) or § 3-104, the Montgomery Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors held a closed session for the purpose **"To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to public business."**

**Time of closed session:** 10:08 a.m. **Place:** Small Conference Room – Agricultural History Farm Park.

**Members who voted to meet in closed session,** Tregoning, McGrath,

**Persons attending closed session:** Zawitoski, Englar, Walker, Linthicum, McGrath, Lewis, Tregoning

**Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session (see statement above):** § 3-305(b)(2)

**Topics discussed:** Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans completed and ready for Board Approval

**Each action Taken:** Approval of 12 Conservation Plans

**Statement concerning entering into an Executive Session following the July 19<sup>th</sup> Open Board Meeting Session:**

**Board Chairman Statement about entering into a closed Session following the July 19<sup>th</sup> MSCD Open Meeting.** MSCD Chairman Doug Tregoning made the following statement: In accordance with (§ 3-306)(c)(2) or § 3-104: "Immediately following the Open Session Meeting, The Montgomery Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors intends to enter a closed session. In accordance with (§ 3-306) (c)(2) of the Open Meetings Law, and for the purpose **to protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to public business**"; the Board by majority vote shall enter into the closed session to discuss and

approve Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans and to discuss landowner-specific -details involving a request for assistance from a county landowner.

**Motion to Enter Closed Session made by:** Linda Lewis,

**Motion seconded by:** Tom Linthicum,

**Members in favor:** Doug Tregoning,

**Opposed:** None

**Abstaining:** None

**Absent:** Robert Butz, Tim McGrath

**ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT MEETING** The open meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m. The next scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting will be in person with the option to attend virtually on September 13, 2024, at 9:00 am.

Regards,



Karen Walker, Administrative Assistant

<b><u>MEETINGS HELD</u></b>	<b><u>PERCENT OF MEETINGS ATTENDED (ROLLING 12 MONTH)</u></b>
Doug Tregoning	83%
Butz	75%
Linthicum	67%
McGrath	92%
Linda Lewis	83%
*Robert Butts	83%
*Joe Lehman	50%
*Chris Miller	67%

\*Associate Members

