



Cecil Soil Conservation District

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Board of Supervisor's Meeting June 18, 2025

The Cecil Soil Conservation District held a Board of Supervisors meeting with a Zoom call-in option. The meeting was called to order at 8:31 AM by Chairman – Bruce Yerkes. Attendees Supervisors – Van Funk, Willie Ewing and Vic Priapi. Associate Supervisors – Alice Crothers. Other attendees: District Conservationist – Rob Weaver, District Manager - Chris Brown, District Coordinator, Tracey Rach and Administrative Assistant – Patty Pierce. Visitors: John Gonzalez, Darren Alles (Maryland Department of Agriculture - Area Coordinator), Cecil County Economic Development, Sandra Edwards, Rebecca Clark and Ariel Balog.

Visitors: Sandra Edwards introduced herself, Rebecca Clark and Ariel Balog employees of the Cecil County Economic Development Office. Everyone in the room introduced themselves. Chris Brown shared an overview of the district involving County, State and Federal employee and partners in agriculture. Chris began the conversation related to the district's desire to develop an Agricultural Economic impact study to highlight the economic impact of the agricultural community. Sandra discussed the current RFP (Request for Proposals) being putting out for a county wide economic impact study and where they are with that. The county wide economic impact study will it encompass agriculture but may not go into the depth that the district is looking for. Sandra explained the strategic plan and the use of a consultant. The study will be diversified with agriculture and tourism. She shared information regarding Cecil County economic progress and how they have been adding business opportunities. The study will be including towns in the process and will help drive economic development. She believes we have a great comprehensive plan and that has helped. The plan is part of the County Executives goals in safety, fiscal responsibility, quality of life and driving economic development. The question was raised if it will provide an impact study, Ag versus industrial taxes, etc. Chris Brown shared the district's view of what an agricultural impact study should include. What does agriculture bring to our County, not only farm products but also the various industries that exist around agriculture. Van Funk indicated that he had read the governor's strategic plan and pillars and agriculture was only mentioned once. We want to make sure locally that agriculture is one of the leading industries driving economic development. Sandra will look at Lancaster's example. Sandra will have meeting this coming Friday and will know how soon she can roll this out. Sandra is requesting an ag ambassador (maybe Chris Brown) to join her advisory committee. The consultant will gather data, but the group questioned where is the data coming from. What is the best way to gather the data? Sandra says we can create one specifically for ag like a focus group. Bruce Yerkes shared past meetings he was involved in regarding the impact studies done in the 90s. Bruce conveyed that such a study should protect the vibrancy of farming and look ahead far enough that agriculture has a voice for the present and the future. Sandra mentions commercial agriculture coming to Cecil County as well as traditional agriculture but questioned how do you determine multipliers? The district is asking for inclusion in the RFP to help make it more robust by contributing. Van Funk stated that Economic Development has the direction with what RFP looks like, our goal is to make agriculture a huge part of it and if there is a need of funds we could help with that.

Darren Alles, Maryland Department of Agriculture Area Coordinator – shared MDA activities for the month of June. MDA will be doing performance evaluations with employees today. The healthy soils grant will spread out \$600,000 over 14 applicants. Conservation Grants processed 300,000 acres of cover crop grants. MDA anticipates they will be adjusting funding of next year's program due to budget restraints. Annual statewide mailings for new year sign up have gone out. Patty Pierce shared information regarding our office program. Our office had a total of eighty-nine participants. Five of the participants cancelled in the fall due to not being able to meet the planting deadline. Only one farmer to report spring certification and be submitted.

Jonathan Quinns board appointment is expiring. Patty Pierce shared that Farm Bureau has three applications to go into SSCC. Applications should arrive soon.

- Van Funk made a motion to accept the May 21, 2025 Board meeting minutes. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Bruce Yerkes asked if the board had reviewed the treasurer's report, expenses, and supplementary emails. There were no questions. Willie Ewing made a motion to accept the treasurer's report and pay bills. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried. Motion was made to add \$500 to a CD in order to get a better rate.

Old Business

- The Maryland Envirothon State Competition was held at the Western Maryland 4-H Park in Swanton, Maryland and the District sponsored Rising Sun High School team. The team placed 11th out of 14 but were extremely pleased with their soils scores and were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the state competition. Tracey Rach shared total expenses for sponsoring the Rising Sun team.
- The Cecil County Wade In was held on Saturday June 14th. Elizabeth Jamison, volunteered to provide outreach at the event representing the district. Sean McCandless also participated leading the group of attendees in the water for the wade-in. Van Funk shared details of activities that happened at the event. Close to 300 hundred people in attendance. 26 exhibitors and a drug take back with Sheriff's Office. The water clarity measurement was 23 inches. Overall, it was a fun event.
- Cecil County Fair will be held July 18th through the 27th. Children's Day will be held July 21st which District staff will participate in. Ag Showcase is July 22nd and the majority of staff will be attending to assist in communicating program opportunities and filter any possible technical assistance questions.
- The FY26 Cover Crop Program has been advertised on MDA's website. Tracey Rach has emailed all past District participants the flyer and posted on social media platforms. This flyer has been shared with the board members. Chris Brown shared a rate comparison chart to show the significant drop in the incentives available to our farmers as well as the reduced base rate. Darren Alles and Patty Pierce shared information regarding the state program and local office
- Tracey Rach made contact with Cecil Community College Foundation and the School of Technology regarding our scholarship discussion from the last meeting. Cecil Community College indicated that the funds the district would be awarded to a student in the Environmental Science or courses such as Botany and Zoology. The School of Technology will award the students to a student pursuing an environmental natural resources-based career or a trade school that focuses on agricultural science. Tracey will be following up with both institutions in January 2026.
- Van Funk shared the upcoming SSCC Meeting will be held in Davidsonville on June 26th. Next week's meeting is in Davidsonville and the next in Salisbury. The district's role in approving E&S

plans will be a discussion point as there have been questions regarding types of stabilization (pollinator habitat) on solar sites. Will there also be a push for wildlife habitat.

- Chris Brown provided the MASCD report. MASCD assessing the need for committees that are not current and/or that could go away. Most committees have not met in years or taken any action in years. Chris Brown and the board of supervisors completed a questionnaire to return to MASCD. Central area meeting will be held virtually before MASCD summer meeting. Based upon everyone's availability the meeting will be held July 16th. Potential topics Area meeting were discussed.

New Business

- Rob Weaver presented the District Activities Report. Staff visited two farms for Inventory & Evaluations for various practices. Two designs were reviewed "in-house". Six projects are in progress. Four as-built designs were reviewed "in-house" and five as-built designs were approved "in-house". One approved application for best management practices was received from MACS. Two claims for best management practices were submitted to MDA/MACS. Rob Weaver shared NRCS financial assistance conservation program activities. Farm Conservation Plans completed and annual goals vs. year-to-date acres acres/information was shared with the group. Chris Brown shared information regarding the planning activities and how they will plan into the new year based upon producer reports. Historically planning priority has been given for the largest tract of acres but required multiple meetings with cooperators. Chris and Rob meeting with planner regarding better use of time and efficiency and meeting with cooperators. Chris Brown shared an opportunity for a tour at FMC Corporation in August for staff and board of supervisors. Thirty-four urban E&S plans were reviewed and sixteen urban E&S plans were approved. One 378- Small Pond plan was reviewed. Six urban meetings were attended. Staff visited two Inventory & Evaluations' trouble shooting issues with ponds. Four stream restoration/wetland creation projects are in progress. Staff attended two stream restoration/wetland creation project meetings. Two information and education events were attended by staff. Staff attended five trainings and twelve-monthly meetings. Chris Brown and Tracey Rach attended MASCD summer planning meeting. Staff completed WIP reconciliation round twenty-nine on MDA tracker. Willie Ewing made a motion to accept the activities report as presented. Vic Priapi seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Rob Weaver shared NRCS Updates. Other USDA agency employees that were working remote are in need of office space. Cecil and Harford offices both now have USDA employees from other agencies working in their offices.
- Willie Ewing made a motion to accept Moon Nurseries of MD, Inc, After the Races, and Great House Farms as new cooperators. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Chris Brown shared information regarding a possible Ag tour of our county with the new Administration and Van suggested reaching our local state legislators.

The next meeting will be held on July 16 at 8:30 AM. The meeting will be held at the office with a teleconference option. The teleconference option will continue to be offered for those working in the field. As there being no further general business, Bruce Yerkes called for a motion to adjourn the general meeting. Van Funk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. The general meeting adjourned at 10:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia A Pierce
Administrative Assistant