



To: Jon Laria, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

From: Greg Bowen, Rural Economies Workgroup Chair

Subj: Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities

Date: May 2, 2014

An organizational meeting was held on April 11 between the new chair of the Rural Economies Workgroup and MDP staff (Joe Tassone, Dan Rosen and Chuck Boyd). The following items were discussed:

- There is a need to develop a series of goals/objectives for the Rural Economies Workgroup to recommend to the Growth Commission so the Commission can affirm its position to promote rural economies and demonstrate a commitment to land preservation and maintaining the quality of life in Maryland's rural communities.
- Similar to the Concentrating Growth Workgroup's annual recommendation on smart growth core program funding levels, the Rural Economies Workgroup should consider developing annual targets of land preservation funding. Greg Bowen and Joe Tassone mentioned that the state already has a state land preservation goal of 1.030 million acres. The Workgroup should work with State agencies to identify a core group of state programs that would be associated with smart growth and land preservation.
- Greg Bowen noted that other states have developed programs to promote local food markets, such as Vermont's local food movement that supports the local farming industries. He also noted that other states are looking at regulatory reform to reduce the impediments for providing local food to schools and farmers' markets. Mr. Bowen pointed out that county health departments are not consistent in their regulations at farmers' markets, making it difficult for farmers to serve markets in multiple counties. Dan Rosen mentioned that the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture (GICA) had looked at various regulatory impediments and that there may be some possible reforms that could be identified there.
- Mr. Bowen mentioned several examples of goals that could be considered for Maryland.
 - North Carolina has a 10% farm to fork goal to build North Carolina's local food economy.
 - USDA farms to school program actively promotes local food production for schools.

- Mr. Bowen suggested that MDP and the Workgroup could conduct a survey of county agricultural market professionals to find out what problems exist marketing local foods and what efforts should be considered to promote more locally grown and sold food.

Based on the discussion on April 11, the following next steps are planned:

- Mr. Tassone agreed to coordinate the development of draft goals/objectives and associated metrics/indicators for the Rural Economies Workgroup to consider. Mr. Tassone will be working with Mr. Bowen and Mr. Rosen to develop proposed objectives to be considered by the Workgroup. A series of draft objectives will be developed in about two plus weeks. They will also be looking into identifying indicators that can be used to measure progress.
- Mr. Boyd agreed to distribute the current listing of Workgroup members to the participants on the conference call and to facilitate recruitment of additional Workgroup members in areas that may not be adequately represented, given the new focus of the Workgroup's mission.
- Mr. Boyd will reach out to existing Workgroup members and inform them of this new focus of the Workgroup and let them know that we will be probably have an in-person meeting with conference call accommodations in mid to late May.
- Mr. Rosen will look into the recommendations/conclusions of the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission on Agriculture to identify potential regulatory reform efforts.