



Rural Economies Workgroup

January 23, 2017

To: Susan Summers, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

From: Greg Bowen, Rural Economies Workgroup Chair

Subj: Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities

Date: January 19, 2017

The Rural Economies Workgroup met on January 13th to review the progress of its subcommittees (Sustainable Food and Food Production, Sustainable Forestry, Land Preservation and Protected Open Space, Rural Development and Recreation, and Sustainable Fisheries). See the attached “Workgroup Agenda and Notes Document” on the status of each subcommittees’ efforts.

The summary of the Workgroup’s discussion follows. The next meeting of the full Workgroup is March 10.

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup Agenda and Notes Document	
Meeting Notes For: Rural Economies Workgroup	
Date and time:	January 13, 2017 @ 3 pm
Called by: Chuck Boyd	Facilitator’s Name: Chuck Boyd
Attendance:	Greg Bowen, Chuck Boyd, Deborah Carpenter, Elliott Campbell, Jason Dubow, Heather Gramm, Joseph Griffiths, Meredith Hill, Steve McHenry, Jim Mullin, John Papagni, Dan Rosen, Sarah Taylor-Rogers, Duane Yoder
Notes Taken By:	Chuck Boyd
Agenda and Notes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance – 14 members attended in person or by conference call. 2. Mr. Boyd briefed the Workgroup on the status of Growth Commission and its upcoming scheduled meeting in Crownsville. 3. Status Report on the five (5) Subcommittees by each facilitator highlighting items discussed and future actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Land Preservation and Protected Open Space Subcommittee (Dan Rosen facilitator) Dan Rosen reported that the Subcommittee had not met since the last Workgroup meeting. He also reported that there may be bill proposed this General Assembly session that would allow solar facilities in Program Open Space land. Dan noted that Maryland Energy Administration, MACo, and other stakeholders has been monitoring the issue of industrial scale electricity generation being located on prime farmland. It was noted that MACo has identified energy facility siting as one of its legislative initiatives for 2017. Jim 	

Mullin informed the Workgroup the public utility judge denied the Mills Branch solar facility application in Kent County. Dan also pointed Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation celebrated its preservation of 300,000 acres.

- B. Rural Development and Recreation Subcommittee (Deborah Carpenter facilitator)
Ms. Carpenter reported on the Subcommittee met twice on December 15 and January 5, where they discussed establishing priority topic areas. A subcommittee survey resulted in the priority areas being set to 1) ReInvest MD, 2) Rural Smart Growth, 3) Energy, 4) Recreation, 5) Value-added Agriculture. The group will set its 2017 strategies to addressing how to apply ReInvest MD principles in rural areas. Long term the other topics will be addressed. Greg Bowen encouraged MDP to explore the potential of developing a Models and Guidelines on “local land use regulation best practices supporting value-added agriculture.” See the attached summary minutes from the two meetings for more details.
 - C. Sustainable Food and Food Production Subcommittee (Dan Rosen facilitator)
Dan Rosen reported that informed the Subcommittee members that the *Johns Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future* had created an interactive [Maryland Food Systems Map](#). Since Subcommittee was interested in creating a directory of food processors, Dan will confirm with the Subcommittee whether this map application satisfies the expectations of the Subcommittee. John Papagni reported that Baltimore’s Food HUB is under development and should be open in June or July. Mr. Papagni will provide the Workgroup more information about the Food HUB
 - D. Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee (Jason Dubow/Elliott Campbell facilitators)
Jason Dubow reported on the Subcommittee’s effort to work with the Charles County Soil Conservation District to integrate Sedimentation Control Plans into the Forest Management Plan process. See the attached report on the results of January 13, 2017 meeting of Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee staff with DNR, Charles County Soil Conservation District, and Charles County Department of Planning & Growth Management
 - E. Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee (Chuck Boyd facilitator)
Mr. Boyd reported the Rock Hall Working Waterfronts presentation at the November Growth Commission meeting was very informative. He indicated that he hoped to initiate a work plan for this subcommittee shortly, probably focusing on the implementation of these working waterfront plans.
4. Next Workgroup meeting is March 10 at 3 pm at MDP’s Olmsted Conference Room in Baltimore.

Results of January 13, 2017 meeting of Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee staff with DNR, Charles County Soil Conservation District, and Charles County Department of Planning & Growth Management

Background

Landowners selling timber must market and negotiate the sale of their timber prior to applying for and receiving permits. Likewise, timber buyers must rely on their experience and professional judgment to predict which trees will be available for harvest and any operational restrictions they shoulder. From the perspective of economics, this is very inefficient and leaves both the buyer and seller disadvantaged. Also, since sales are negotiated prior to permits, there is pressure on all parties (government, landowner, timber buyer) to get permits finalized as quickly as possible to proceed with the sale.

All timber harvests must first obtain an approved Erosion & Sediment Control permit as specified by the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.17.01 and the 2011 Maryland Standards and Specifications and the Stormwater Management Act of 2007 and issued by the local Soil Conservation District. The permit remains valid for two years after issuance. Some harvests will require additional approvals, such as for harvesting within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, harvesting within specially designated areas identified by DNR Heritage, and to comply with rules of local County governments (e.g., specific rules within certain zoning districts, highway impact fees, etc.). Obtaining the various permits typically takes two or three weeks, but it is not uncommon for some applications to require three months or more for review.

Potential Charles County Pilot Program

One of the priorities in the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee's *Priority Action Items* list, as approved by the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission, is to integrate the Erosion & Sediment Control Plan with forest management plans. Foresters recommending a timber harvest during the planning horizon of the management plan would have the option to incorporate the timber harvesting specifications and restrictions within the planning document itself.

At the suggestion of MACo's designee, Charles Rice, Charles County Department of Planning & Growth Management (DPGM), to the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee, the lead staff for the Subcommittee met with staff of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Charles County Soil Conservation District (SCD) and Charles County DPGM on January 13, 2017 in La Plata.

At the meeting, the parties discussed the reasons for pursuing the integration of the Erosion & Sediment Control Plan with forest management plans, and the Charles County SCD and DPGM discussed their goals and concerns. This led to the parties developing an approach that appears to meet everyone's goals through procedural changes.

Specifically, the approving body (the SCD in the case of Charles County) would give preliminary approval of the integrated plan, at which point a pre-approval letter would be issued and application fees paid. This preliminary approval letter, which would be subject to change in state or local law or in the nature of the landscape (e.g. finding of RTE species), would receive final approval at the pre-harvest inspection meeting.

This change will allow both the landowner and timber buyer to have certainty in the quantity of timber at the time of sale, and allow a harvest permit to be issued quickly after the sale is finalized. The change would also eliminate the pressure on all parties to get permits issued after a sale is negotiated, since issuance of the permits and sale negotiation would happen concurrently.

This does not imply any alteration to rules or restrictions on timber harvests other than the timing of when the permits are approved. All standards, specifications, seasonal restrictions, habitat protections, advance notifications prior to commencing harvests, and all other requirements would remain as they currently exist. The application process for timber harvests on lands without forest management plans would not change.

The Charles County Soil Conservation District has expressed interest in partnering with DNR in making this change, pending a detailed review of the pertinent regulations and operation procedures. This review by SCD and DNR staff is scheduled to occur prior to the end of January 2017. If everything is found to be conducive to the change, a meeting with Charles Co. private foresters and local DNR foresters will be held to brief them on how this change will be implemented.

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup – Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee Minutes	
Meeting Notes For:	Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee
Date and time:	December 15, 2016
Called by: Deborah Carpenter	Facilitator’s Name: Deborah Carpenter
Attendance:	Deborah Carpenter, Dianne Chasse, Joe Rogers, Chuck Boyd
Notes Taken By:	Deborah Carpenter
Minutes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome – new member noted; review of subcommittee purpose and strategies as previously designated in 2015; goal of group is to prioritize 3 topic areas for discussion and formulation of recommendations to the Rural Economies Workgroup 2. Discussion of possible topic areas: This discussion focused on the possible topic areas of (1) revitalization measures in the ReInvest MD document especially in relation to regulations and policies, financial tools and rural transit and TOD; (2) legislative issues; (3) priority funding areas; (4) rural infrastructure; (5) energy; (6) recreation 3. It was decided that since numbers were small, a meeting summary will be distributed via email to other members requesting their input and votes for top 3 topics prior to the next meeting. 4. Members present were asked to consider other members that should be invited. Dru Schmidt-Perkins of 1000 Friends of MD has stepped down. Chuck will ask his contacts at Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and will speak to Kim Brandt of 1000 Friends of MD. 5. Next Subcommittee meeting is January 5, 2017 	
Key Actions (and who has agreed take on)	Describe action and indicate when action is due
1.	Debbie will distribute meeting summary to members with a request for submission of top 3 topic areas
2.	Debbie will compile the results in preparation for the next meeting
3.	Chuck will contact appropriate individuals about joining the subcommittee and provide link to PFA presentation
Resource Materials used and draft documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Development & Recreation Dropbox - ReInvest MD -links to rural economy bills from last session

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup – Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee Minutes	
Meeting Notes For:	Rural Development & Recreation Subcommittee
Date and time:	January 5, 2017
Called by: Deborah Carpenter	Facilitator’s Name: Deborah Carpenter
Attendance:	Deborah Carpenter, Dianne Chasse, Joe Rogers, Chuck Boyd, Joe Griffith, Les Knapp, Duane Yoder, Jim Mullen, Colby Ferguson
Notes Taken By:	Deborah Carpenter
Minutes:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome – The meeting was opened by reviewing the list of attendees and discussing the addition of other members. Chuck will look into finding a representative to replace Dru Schmidt-Perkins of Thousand Friends of MD with another representative either from that group or the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. 2. Discussion of priority topic areas: A subcommittee survey resulted in the priority areas being set to 1) ReInvest MD, 2) Rural Smart Growth, 3) Energy, 4) Recreation, 5) Value-added Agriculture. The group will set its 2017 strategies to addressing how to apply ReInvest MD principles in rural areas. Long term the other topics will be addressed. 3. Starting at the next meeting the group will begin to investigate the ReInvest MD recommendations with an eye to pulling out that which is important specifically to rural areas. Once specific areas for recommendation are established the group will focus on identifying funding, responsibility for action and accountability. 4. The group will also keep an eye on pending legislation that may help facilitate reinvestment in rural areas. One such bill that was mentioned is the Rural Economic Development bill that is likely to be brought forward this session. 5. It was also recommended that the group aim to establish a framework of reinvestment issues by this summer and then develop a survey that can be distributed to various groups in order to ensure that our focus is on track with the issues that exist. 6. Next Subcommittee meeting is February 9, 2017 	
Key Actions to be taken prior to next meeting (and who has agreed take on)	Describe action and indicate when action is due
4.	Chuck will provide copies of ReInvest MD to subcommittee members.
5.	Chuck will contact the appropriate individuals about inclusion in the subcommittee.
6.	Debbie and Duane will obtain language for the Rural Economic Development bill proposed and forward to members.
7.	Debbie will work on a proposed strategy re-write focused on the ReInvest MD priority.
8.	All will read the ReInvest MD documentation, as well as any applicable legislative information.
Resource Materials used and draft documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey results - ReInvest MD recommendations