

Anne Arundel County Agriculture Farming and Agriculture Commission (Commission name for 2021)
Now, operating as the Anne Arundel County Agriculture Commission
Annual Report 2021

The mission of the Anne Arundel County Agriculture, Farming and Agritourism Commission (the Commission) (newly named the Anne Arundel County Agriculture Commission) is the promotion, coordination, development, furtherance and establishment of agriculture, farming and agritourism in Anne Arundel County. The Commission is tasked with studying relevant and pertinent agriculturally related topics as presented by the county executive and the agriculture community of Anne Arundel County and to report back to the County Executive with information and recommendations. The Commission serves at the pleasure of the County Executive in a format to review and make recommendations to the County Executive regarding the needs of the agriculture community. The Commission consists of 13 voting members and 12 non-voting/ex officio members. The Commission met quarterly in 2021 on the following dates: January 14, April 8, August 12, and December 16. The Commission, as a practice, develops committees to focus on various agricultural topics deemed relevant to the full Commission, to allow for a focused group to research, discuss, and present information and recommendations to the full Commission. The active Committees of 2021 included: Administrative, African American Agricultural Heritage Committee, Ag Education, Alcohol, Farm Stays, On-Farm Weddings, and Legislative.

OVERVIEW In 2021

The Commission focused on the efforts of the following committees; Agriculture Education, Legislative (replaced Upper Limits Committee) with respect to legislation and code requirements, and African American Agricultural Heritage. The Commission became aware of the planned RAC Center as presented by Craig Sewell of the Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission. The respective committees, collaborated with county agencies and community members, and studied these topics.

1. Administrative Committee: The administrative committee met and/or emailed quarterly through the year of 2021. The Administrative Committee reported at the August 20th meeting that various committees continued to work with the county's administration on pending draft legislation regarding on-farm weddings and farm stays.

2. African American Agricultural Heritage Committee: Preliminary research began early in January to set a foundation with respect to agriculture in Anne Arundel County as related to African American heritage and history. Discussions of the histories of slave trading that funded Georgetown University were presented and the conversation was set to continue. The Committee was unavailable to present any further discussion or studies.

3. Ag Education Committee: The Ag Education Committee was very active in 2021. The Committee began working on student pathways to allow students to attend Ag Science classes at Southern High School. Dr. Eckels, Future Farmers of America program administrator and Ag Education director at

Southern High School garnered support in adding Food Science and Ag Mechanics class to the CASE curriculum at Southern High School. Several members of the Ag Education Committee and the Commission testified at the District 7 Town Hall meeting hosted by County Executive Stuart Pittman and Council Member Jessica Haire to support the budgetary and logistical processes that would establish Southern High School as a magnet school for Ag Education for county students. Discussions are ongoing and collaboration with the county Parks and Rec's and the County Administration with respect to the long term ag education uses of the Rockhold Creek property. Several members of the Ag Education Committee and the Ag Commission, upon their own volition, testified at the aforementioned County Budget Town Hall requesting needed funds for further development of the 4-H and Ag Education barn at Rockhold Creek. The committee recommended further pursuit with experts regarding aquaculture and hydroponics in order to move forward with the Dan Tootle Aquaculture and greenhouse project. The formation of the Anne Arundel and Prince George's Urban Farming Research Clinic was announced by Dave Myers, and is in the process of being initiated through the Maryland Ag Extension Program.

4. On Farm Alcohol Committee: This committee was declared to be inactive at the first meeting in January 2021, until needed in the future. It remained inactive for the entirety of 2021.

5. Farm Stays Committee: Bill 69-50 became effective January 25, 2021, allowing on-farm stays, and the Farm Stay Committee was declared inactive.

6. Legislative Committee: This committee worked with Lynn Miller to reach the necessary county staff in efforts to pursue the SDP exemption for specified farming and agricultural projects. The SDP advancements were unanimously supported by the County Council and bill 74-21 passed in October, 2021. Lori Rhodes mentioned the administration sponsoring Bill 106-21 which will allow farm alcohol in RCA districts which was missed on the original legislation in 2020.

7. On-Farm Weddings Committee: This committee was declared to be inactive as the legislation (Bill 69-20) allowing special events on farms passed in December 2020.

Regional Agriculture Center (RAC CENTER): Craig Sewell of the Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission (SMADC) presented to the Commission at the August and December meetings. Mr. Sewell presented the concept of the RAC and the grant proposal(s) that he was submitting in various arenas. The RAC had been planned for a site in St. Mary's County and there were issues with the site moving forward. Mr. Sewell was making us aware of a potential opportunity and locations in AA County were discussed. Ultimately, Mr. Sewell reported that the St. Mary's County site was able to move forward and no further discussions were warranted with Anne Arundel County.