



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
County Executive

STEPHEN LAFFERTY, Director  
Department of Planning

Baltimore County Agriculture Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes

**MEETING: February 9, 2022 Board Meeting – 6:30 PM @ Webex Virtual Meeting**

**Attendees:**

**Board Members Present:** Steve Myer, Holly Gilmore, Brenda Strohmer

**Staff:** Joseph Wiley, Megan Benjamin, David Birkenthal

**Others:** Eric Hines (ex-officio, NRCS), Jim Ensor (ex-officio, Soil and Water Conservation District), Ann Jones (ex officio, Baltimore County Land Trust Alliance), Erika (ex-officio, UMD Extension), Dan Schuster, Steve Warfield, Steve Smith, Chris Lessner

**Steve Myer called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM**

**I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES/ADDITION OR DELETION OF AGENDA ITEMS:**

A. Approval of Minutes of: **January 12, 2022**

Motion: To approve the minutes of January 12, 2022

**Motioned by:** Brenda Strohmer

**Seconded by:** Holly Gilmore

**Decision:** Unanimous Approval

**II. MALPF EASEMENT LANDOWNER REQUESTS/ISSUES**

**III. BALTIMORE COUNTY EASEMENT/LANDOWNER REQUESTS/ ISSUES**

**IV. BALTIMORE COUNTY PERMITS & DEVELOPMENT APPLICANTS**

A. **Schuster, Dan A. – Johnnycake Farms LLC – 8020 Johnnycake Road, Windsor Mill – 15.87 ac – RC-6**

**Request:** Review and determination of whether to support an Agricultural Use Designation for the proposed indoor horse riding/training structure

**Background:** Mr. Schuster's property, located at 8020 Johnnycake Road in Windsor Mill, is 15.87 acres. The property is held by Johnnycake Farms, LLC and was originally purchased in 2017. The property is zoned RC-6. Mr. Schuster also owns the parcel to the southeast (Tax Map 96, Parcel 1), which is 13.86 acres.

Mr. Schuster intends to build an indoor horse riding/training facility. Based on communications with Mr. Schuster's representatives on January 28, 2022, the proposed structure will be used for the small equine farming operation on the property. Mr. Schuster maintains a larger equine operation at other sites and has extensive experience in equine farming.

The structure will have a footprint of approximately 14,400 SF.

Mr. Schuster's representative has been advised by Jim Ensor, Soil & Water Conservation District and ex-officio Board member, to seek an agricultural use designation for the indoor riding/training structure from the Board.

**Discussion:** David Birkenthal (staff) provided background to the Board. Jim Ensor expressed reservations regarding the potential public use of the proposed structure without having received building permits due to the requested agricultural use exemption. Steve Myer noted the potential public use structures should likely receive safety permitting. Dan Schuster informed the board that those using the structure will not be the general public, but rather families him and those in his company have become close friends through their community work. Steve Warfield informed the board that the applicant intends to receive a stormwater management permit and build a safe structure, but does not intend to open the private structure for rentals from the general public or some similar use. Dan Schuster informed the board that the predominant users of the facility will be his grandchildren for riding lessons, and there will be no commercial uses at the facility, which will have approximately 3 ponies and 3 horses. He stated that this would be the third indoor riding facility he has built, in addition to those he has remodeled.

Holly Gilmore stated that she is familiar with Mr. Schuster’s youth program and inquired as to whether the ring inside the pasture will include fencing along the walls. Dan Schuster informed the board that there would be additional fencing to ensure that horses could get out. Steve Myer expressed his support for the agricultural use designation. Megan Benjamin (staff) noted that the board was only determining whether to grant an the agricultural use designation, rather than a building permit.

Motion: To approve the agricultural use designation for the proposed indoor riding facility structure

**Motioned by:** Brenda Strohmer

**Seconded by:** Holly Gilmore

**Decision:** Unanimous Approval

**B. Lessner, Christopher J. –1906 Freeland Road, Freeland (2 Lots)– 38.144 & 13.77 ac – RC-8**

**Request:** Review and determination of whether to support an Agricultural Use Designation for the proposed barn structure

**Background:** The two Lessner properties are located on Freeland Road in Freeland. Both properties are zoned RC-8. The Lessners purchased the larger, 38.14 acre property at 1906 Freeland Road in July of 2021 and recently purchased the additional 13.77 acre lot on the opposite side of Freeland Road. The Lessners have an existing farming operation with cows, chickens, a goat, and hay production. They are looking to use the additional 15 acres for corn production, as their research shows this lot has historically been viable for such a use. A barn structure is currently located on the 38.14 acre lot near the main dwelling. The Lessners have discovered that this existing barn structure is too small for their needs and is in need of repairs. The Lessners are seeking an agricultural designation for a proposed barn structure to be located on the recently purchased 13.77 acre lot. Jim Ensor, Soil & Water Conservation District and ex-officio Board member, recommended that the Board considers the proposed barn structure for an agricultural use designation. The Lessners report that the proposed barn structure will be used to support the existing farming operation and any additional crop cultivation that occurs on the 13.77 acre parcels.

**Discussion:** David Birkenthal (staff) provided background to the board. Jim Ensor noted that the pasture on the farm is quite wet, which will be an issue for grazing animals while adhering to the soil conservation plan. He was unsure whether the Soil and Water Conservation District would be able to grant their use permit due to this difficulty adhering to the plan. Chris Lessner informed the board that he had had soil sampling testing which demonstrated the soil’s potential for cultivation. The proposed barn structure will support an increase in hay production at the property. The existing barn structure is incapable of housing the appropriate machinery for an increased hay production operation. Eric Hines inquired as to whether there would be row crop or pasture cultivation on the southern property. Chris Lessner informed the board that they intend to do row crop cultivation on the property which the proposed barn structure will support. Steve Myer stated that it would be beneficial for

the applicants to create a farm plan and that the proposed structure is clearly intended for agricultural use. Chris Lessner reconfirmed the intended agricultural use of the barn structure and noted that the northern property currently has 10 acres of hay on the property.

Motion: Approve the legitimacy of agricultural use designation for the proposed barn structure

**Motioned by:** Brenda Strohmer

**Seconded by:** Holly Gilmore

**Decision:** Unanimous Approval

## **V. STATUS OF EASEMENT TRANSACTIONS/ INSPECTIONS/ UPDATES**

Megan Benjamin (staff) informed the board that the applications for the county and state land preservation programs are now open with a deadline of April 29, 2022. She also informed the board that a number of easement are moving through the approval process at the county and that we will hopefully hear soon about the approved MALPF FY22 applications.

## **VI. MISCELLANEOUS/ INFORMATION/ CORRESPONDENCE/ NEWS ARTICLES**

### **A. MALPF Annual Report FY21**

Megan Benjamin (staff) recommended that the board reviews the provided MALPF Annual Report.

### **B. Baltimore County Land Preservation Signage**

Megan Benjamin (staff) presented the new signage to be offered to participants in the Baltimore County land preservation for display on their properties.

## **VII. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

Next Meeting: March 9, 2022

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**