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## Cecil Soil Conservation District

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### **Board of Supervisor's Meeting December 17, 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 10:05 by Chairman – Bruce Yerkes. Attendees Supervisors – Van Funk, Willie Ewing, and Alice Crothers. Other attendees: District Manager - Chris Brown, District Conservationist - Robert Weaver, Administrative Assistant – Patty Pierce, District Coordinator – Tracey Rach. Visitor: Darren Alles, MDA Area Coordinator.

- Darren Alles shared an MDA update regarding District Operations, Program Planning & Evaluation, Conservation Grants, Nutrient Management, Maryland Agriculture Commission and AFO Permit in Maryland. The newly developed planner reporting workbook has some minor changes and will be available for use in January. Darren announced the retirements of Bonita Sims (MDA Administrative Officer) and Pat Gitlin (Grants Administrator) this month. He shared current vacancies. The deadline for submitting cover crop fall certification is Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. All inspections are complete. Chris Brown shared a document regarding the Definition of Agriculture for Maryland Ag Commission. General definition and subsections. This is guidance for state agencies for what ag is. The group discussed nutrient management issues, including the winter ban on spreading manure and the challenges of managing CAFO's with zero discharge requirements. They highlighted the potential impact of these regulations on small operations and expressed concerns about the double standards between federal and state requirements.
- Van Funk made a motion to accept the November 17, 2025 Board meeting minutes. Willie Ewing seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Bruce Yerkes asked if the board had reviewed the treasurer's report, and expenses. There were no questions. Willie Ewing made a motion to file the treasurer's report and pay bills. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried. Chris Brown reviewed a quote for server equipment that has failed. Willie Ewing made a motion to approve the purchase of the new APC Smart UPS replacement. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.

#### Old Business

- Chris Brown and Tracey Rach provided updates on the upcoming Cooperator Banquet. Tickets sales were reported to be at around 115. Chris Brown provided an update regarding the presentation progress. We will order plaque for short presentation for Jonathan Quinn even if Jon isn't able to attend the event.
- Van Funk provided a State Soil Conservation Committee update and discussed the state committee's structure and upcoming changes, including the potential transition of the vice chair to the chair position. The position is appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. Van is willing to visit the districts to help recruit. Hopeful for districts to make recommendations for district

supervisors. Van also talked about the transition to an online application process for state committee appointments and the importance of improving the quality of applications. The next meeting is December 18<sup>th</sup> at the Farm Bureau office in Davidsonville; MD. Meetings are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month. He mentioned the need to restart a meeting between MDA, NRCS, and MDE to discuss new CAFO rules. Next topics being committee reviews (10-15 minutes), closed meeting process, open meetings act, legislative update and the MDA and District MOU – Subcommittee. A new E&S manual and WIP updates are also planned points of discussion.

### New Business

- Rob Weaver presented the District Activities Report. Staff visited five farms for Inventory & Evaluations for various practices. Four projects were surveyed. Two designs were approved by NRCS. Five projects are in progress. One “as-built” survey was completed and one “as-built” design was reviewed. One approval for a best management practice design was received from MDA/MACS for cost share. Staff are currently conducting on-farm *status reviews* received from MDA/MACS. Rob Weaver shared NRCS financial assistance conservation program activities. He provided an update on conservation plans and practices, noting that they are close to doubling their annual goal. There were twelve Farm Conservation Plans Completed and seventy-seven Conservation Practices Applied by planners in November. Nineteen urban E&S plans were reviewed and seventeen urban E&S plans were approved. Five 378- Small Pond plans were reviewed. Five urban meetings were attended. Chris Brown provided an update regarding Chesapeake Club bi-weekly meetings. One agricultural stormwater management and erosion and sediment control I&E was attended for a riding arena. One stream restoration/wetland creation project is in progress. The group reviewed various trainings and meetings attended by staff. The district will be updating the activity report format to be more modern and reflective of current activities in the coming year. Willie Ewing made a motion to accept the activities report as presented. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- NRCS updates and planning and tracking. Rob Weaver shared updates on NRCS operations and funding, noting that they are now fully funded through the year, though concerns of potential government shutdowns were raised.
- Dan Polite provided a MACS flat rate update and transition to a new code-based system for flat rates., inspired by Western Maryland’s approach, which has reduced line items from 1,200 to 375. The goal is to simplify applications and reduce errors, aligning with EQIP’s component-based system. Despite challenges in creating guiding documents and receiving feedback, Dan has made progress by focusing on pipe drops and reducing line items to 400. The next step is to further refine the items and finalize the new system by December 23rd. This new system should reduce errors when submitting applications. Dan discussed the challenges and benefits of transitioning to a component-based system for cost tracking and reimbursement in the MACS program, emphasizing the need for accurate line items and the ability to adjust rates annually. He noted that Western Maryland’s rates are lower than those of neighboring regions, which could impact future applications and reimbursement. Dan also highlighted the potential for an electronic application system to streamline processes, but expressed concerns about the current reliance on flat rates, which can be disclosed to contractors and affect pricing. MDA provided document for new system – categorizing by BMP. Moving forward Dan believes that MACS and EQIP co-cost share should still work well but may have some adjustments. General guidance documents and new format was discussed.
- Willie Ewing made a motion to accept Gideon S. Esh, Julie Poludniak, Chris Price, and Nothings Easy, LLC as new cooperators. Van Funk seconded the motion. Motion carried.

- Chris Brown shared an update regarding the County Budget. Departments are now submitting through the Munis System but the district will still be able to submit independently and directly through finance.
- Chris Brown shared an update regarding the Cecil County Economic Development Ag Coordinator position update. Chris sat in on interviews. Malik Grace will be introduced on January 27<sup>th</sup>. He worked for USDA at NAS and Foreign Agricultural Services since 2020. He is currently a 6<sup>th</sup> grade Science teacher in Baltimore City. He grew up on a farm in Georgia.
- Chris Brown provided an update to the RFP Economic Development study. Alice Crothers shared information about community stakeholders input for long term strategic plan. This input will be taken after they select outside consultants in spring/March. Independent Consultant outside of the county staff will be leading the strategic plan process.
- Bruce Yerkes indicated that he would like to see some cooperators be invited to upcoming board meetings to give input on how the district is doing. Alternatively, emails could be sent out to gauge cooperator satisfaction with the district.

The next meeting will be held on January 14, 2026 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. Willie Ewing made a motion to adjourn the meeting adjourn. Van Funk seconded the motion. The general meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Patricia A Pierce*

Patricia A Pierce  
Administrative Assistant

Board Member Current Attendance Record 2025

Bruce Yerkes, Chairman	100%
Willie Ewing, Co Chairman	75%
Van Funk, Treasurer	100%
Vic Priapi, Member	58%
Alice Crothers, Member	75%