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## Agricultural Resources Advisory Committee (ARAC) Annual Report

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### Summary

The ARAC legislation and bylaws state that “the Committee shall advise the County Executive and County Council on issues of interest to the agricultural and rural populace, both on the Committee’s own initiative and upon the request of either branch of County government. The Committee shall submit an annual report to the County Executive and County Council summarizing its activities during the preceding year together with any recommendations or requests it deems appropriate to further the public purpose of the Committee.”

After the pandemic pause in 2020 and 2021, ARAC resumed meeting on July 27, 2022. This annual report shall cover the period from July 2022 to December 2023. A total of six meetings (including an urban farm tour in Prince George’s County) were held during this period on a quarterly basis. Guests and members of the public were present, including County staff members. Annual report topics include ARAC purpose, accomplishments, membership changes, briefings and presentations, recommendations, and requests.

### Purpose of ARAC

ARAC was enacted by [CB-07-2012](#), establishing the Committee to serve as a link between the farming community and local government. The powers and duties of ARAC are as follows:

1. Serve as the central point of information for the farming community regarding governmental programs affecting agricultural operations;
2. Advise County government regarding the effect on agricultural operations of existing laws, policies, rules and regulations;
3. Advise County government regarding the effect on agricultural operations of potential laws, policies, rules and regulations;

4. Work to establish better communication and understanding between the agricultural industry and the community at large; and
5. Advise the County government on the implementation of state and local initiatives pertaining to development such as, but not limited to, rural legacy, nutrient management, and smart growth programs.

## **Accomplishments**

- **February 1, 2023:**
  - Review of Legislation Affecting the Agricultural Community (February 1, 2023)
  - Update on Fatigues-to-Farmers and Working with USVets on acquiring a farm property to house veterans and provide them with farming opportunities
  - Update on Plans for a 2024 Urban Farm Festival
  - Update on Joint Base Andrews Transition Assistance Program for veterans and opportunities for veterans to farm on the Base (at JBA)
- **Urban Farm Tour, May 17, 2023:**
  - The Garden International  
11890 Old Baltimore Pike, Beltsville, MD 20705
  - Blue Berwyn Farm  
5801 Berwyn Road, Berwyn Heights MD, 20740
  - ECO City Farms (Bladensburg)  
6100 Emerson St, Bladensburg, MD 20710
  - The Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins Regional Park  
601 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro MD, 20774
  - opportunities for veterans to farm on the Base (at JBA)
- **Submittal of ARAC Annual Report for 2022**
- **Completion of draft ARAC one-page statement of mission, goals, and objectives**
- **Discussion of a role for ARAC in promoting workshops and educational events about farming practices and food systems, for community members**
- **Membership**
  - Chair and Co-Chair led discussions on establishing a course of action to fill all ARAC vacancies.

## **Recommendations (continued from 2022)**

- To have as a perk for the ARAC Chair could be their farm being pictured on the ARAC logo.

- To make DPIE and DoE aware of the meeting schedule.
- To plan a County Council briefing on agriculture in the County: Planning for a briefing began in 2019 when ARAC discussed having an in-depth briefing for the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment Committee, and then a briefing for the entire County Council, either at a Council hearing or a Council retreat. It would include some urban agriculture success stories, and showcasing successes in other counties and states. The ARAC members might elect to give brief overviews of their area of interest (i.e., forestry, livestock, equine, urban agriculture, wine industry or others). Topics might include establishing a policy on backyard chickens, drilling wells, logging, food recalls, and having more teachers who are versed in Future Farmers of America (FFA) as a subject matter in Prince George's County schools.

### **Requests (continued from 2022)**

- To allow ARAC members to recommend persons to fill vacancies.
- To allow the representatives of the USDA or PGCAR to be a non-resident if necessary, as long as their area of responsibility includes Prince George's County. All farmer/citizen positions would need to be residents.
- To add a position on ARAC for a representative of the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation.
- To complete the process of appointing two ex-officio members, to be appointed by the County Council and the County Executive.
- To provide to the County Council and the County Executive a report on the state of agriculture in Prince George's County.
- To explore the possibility of encouraging or incentivizing the construction of solar arrays on rooftops, covered parking lots, or on PEPCO rights-of-way where a solar company can maintain it, and not on farmland. This was suggested through county legislation or other means.
- To include ARAC in the Department of Parks and Recreation decision-making process on making more M-NCPPC/DPR land available for farming.
- To conduct an ARAC farm tour in each upcoming year.