



ONE COMMON BOND—THE HORSE; ONE COMMON VOICE— MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

No Maryland Horse Park at the Dairy Farm

by *Steuart Pittman*

Reporting on Behalf of the Maryland Horse Council; Anne Arundel County

We had the ideal site and a solid proposal. The Maryland Horse Park at the Navy Dairy Farm in Gambrells was a no-brainer to the folks in the Department of Business and Economic Development. Maryland could generate more than enough tax revenue to cover the costs of a Horse Park by making it the best in the country and placing it in the Washington / Baltimore corridor. Governor Ehrlich liked it and Governor O'Malley liked it. The past and current secretaries of the MD Department of Agriculture like it. Horse people loved it, and let that be known.

Anne Arundel County horsemen stood to benefit the most, so with the help of the MD Horse Council we organized and got involved politically. We had an impact, and were it not for the final vote count of absentee ballots in the county executive race in November, we would probably be reporting a very different outcome.

Most people thought George Johnson, the guy who spent a day with us touring the Virginia Horse Center during Pony Club Nationals, would win the election easily. He lost by a nose to John Leopold, who had met with a small group of Dairy Farm neighbors and promised to oppose the Horse Park.

You could say that we lost the campaign in the early days before the project was announced. That is when we should have knocked on doors in Gambrells and asked people to join our effort to get a Horse Park onto the site to maintain the open space. Instead, word got out that the Stadium Authority's Horse Park would inundate the neighborhood with traffic and destroy the historic farmland.

Environmentalists who took the time to review the plans acknowledged that the horse park would be better for the environment than conventional or organic farming. Some neighbors could see that a horse park would open up the land for other public uses like hiking, soccer, and picnics. Economists could see the benefits to the county and state tax base. Open space advocates understood how promoting the local horse industry would prevent farms from becoming housing developments.

But the wrong guy was elected county executive and he stood by his promise to oppose good public policy. The county will now try to lease the farm from the Navy, even without a sensible plan to use it. Were logic involved in the decision-making Mr. Leopold would see that by partnering with the state the land could be home to the horse park and a county park. We have left open the door to such negotiation, but do not expect him to enter. We will fight to have the land opened up to equestrian use, but must look elsewhere for the state's horse park.

The Maryland Horse Industry Board, we understand, will search for a new site. Next time we must build the kind of coalition that no politician can ignore. It will include neighbors, environmentalists, farmers, local businesses, and of course some pretty savvy horse people who won't take no for an answer.

Letters To To MHC

Hello,

I am concerned about the lack of choices a horse owner has in disposing of a horse carcass. I recently talked to a friend who said that in Kentucky horse owners are turning horses loose as they can not afford to have the horses euthanized and pay the rendering company. What have we created with the changes in horse slaughter laws? No, I am not in favor of debilitated horses travelling long distances on double deck trailers to slaughter houses. With the increase of the number of horses in Maryland there is a problem of disposal.

The rendering company(s) has greatly increased their fees. Most of us do not have enough acreage to bury a horse on our property. So what are we supposed to do?

A few years ago we had an excellent solution to the problem, The Maryland State Animal Lab in Frederick was accepting horse carcass for incineration. Due to various reasons they are no longer providing this service. I had the opportunity to dispose of 3 of my horses in this manner. I believe that I paid a total of \$125 and that included a necropsy which provided me with information as to my horses illness. Now I have to take my horse carcass to College Park; how out of touch that is for us in the western part of the state? WHAT needs to happen so that the Maryland State Animal Lab in Frederick can again provide the service of a cost effective, palatable disposal of our beloved equine?

Sincerely,

Ellen Miller, Washington County

Dear Ms. Miller

MHC is likewise concerned about this subject. A comparison study of state lab fees released by the Maryland Department of Agriculture underscores the concerns:

Necropsy Fees for horses of more than 300 lbs:

Ohio: \$35 • NJ: \$42 • NC: \$25 • VA: \$66 • KY: \$80 • PA: \$88 • MD: \$275

Please be sure to join the Maryland Horse Council in order to stay active on this issue!

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Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors

Tuesday, May 15, 2007 • Show Place Arena

Prince George's Equestrian Center • Meet & Greet Reception 6 p.m.

Great for networking! • Business 7 p.m. • 2007 Legislative Wrap Up

Trails & Greenways Meetings & Invitational Rides

ALL ARE INVITED

Attend the meeting and/or attend the trail ride!

Wednesday, Oct 3 at 7:30 p.m. – League of Maryland Horsemen

Oct. 12-14 Fall Invitational Trail Ride • League of Maryland Horsemen

For more information, please contact peg1212@gmail.com

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