



## **MARYLAND EQUINE RESOURCE COUNCIL**

Dear Baltimore County Executive, Baltimore County Council and Director of Recreation and Parks,

I assume you are all in receipt of a recent letter sent by Councilman Wade Kach dated August 22<sup>nd</sup>, letter attached, in reference to the establishment of the Maryland Equine Resource Council (MERC). I am the primary individual and driving force, in addition to my board members, requesting to form the new nature council in support of equine recreation and fund raising for the equine therapy program located at the Baltimore County AG Center to benefit veterans with PTSD (a number of which have been Baltimore County employees) and individuals with memory care issues. The formation of this new nature council is in no way intending to harm the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council (MARC), either intentionally or unintentionally, if anything, the new council would benefit MARC in an all ships rise approach similar in the approach that I have taken with other nature councils via my efforts in the rehabilitation of Lake Roland and in the development of the Lake Roland Nature Council and Paw Point Dog Park. Via those entities, we have able to project those resources and guidance to assist in the formation of several dog parks in the county including Perry Paw Dog Park in Perry Hall and also assist other nature councils in areas that they either lack equipment or expertise to accomplish certain tasks at their own site for example. Based on a long and proven track record as an asset enhancer and maintenance and resource expense cost reducer for Baltimore County, all of which benefits the Baltimore County tax payer, our goal is to produce the same result with the Maryland Equine Resource Council, maximizing value. The Director of Recreation and Parks Barry Williams, Councilwoman Vicki Almond and Councilman David Marks can attest to those actions and results that have been produced by the Lake Roland Nature Council and myself.

I have reached out to Councilman Kach on several occasions since the beginning of August and have an e-mail and voice message trail to that effect with his staff and I have yet to hear from him to discuss the formation of the new nature council in his district or now this attached letter which was drafted and sent by Councilman Kach without any contact with anyone involved with the Maryland Equine Resource Council including myself. I have additional correspondence with the MARC board Chairman that I can send to you if it would be helpful and would give a greater context to the issue, but in essence the MARC board has been opposed to therapeutic equine. They are supportive of the therapy, they are not supportive of the therapy being delivered at the Maryland Agricultural Center location. They have made that position crystal clear to Baltimore County. In the spring of this year, I expressed to the Chairman of MARC my interest and intent in forming the Maryland Equine Resource Council to which he was opposed. Since that time, I have offered on several occasions to meet or that I was available to discuss the matter, but there has been no contact initiated by MARC regarding the matter. Several days ago, I received via certified mail the attached letter stating their board somewhat

changed direction in that they are still opposed to the formation of the Maryland Equine Resource Council as a standalone Nature Council, but would accept MERC as a sub-committee of MARC, to which I graciously declined and in my decline I stated that I have discussed this issue with their Board Chairman in the spring with no formal response since that time, that their heart really is not in it as it relates to therapeutic equine and that this offer is really a stop gap reaction to the Parks Board meeting scheduled for September 12th, which is only three weeks away. I have yet to be contacted to meet with their board during this entire time frame, therefore, how would success be achieved by being a sub-committee under this fact pattern?

I expressed to their Chairman when I graciously declined their offer that there were fundamental and philosophical differences at hand, all stated as functional and approach differences, not as a judgement:

- MARC's approach and my approach as it relates to tax payer funded/owned assets and how to deliver value to the actual owners of those assets is just different, in particular as it relates to who is perceived to be the actual owner of the asset.
- MARC's approach and my approach regarding how to work with Baltimore County government, politicians, county staff, etc. and the critical roles these parties play as partners is just very different.
- The way MARC approaches issues through social media and print media is just different then the way I approach things, especially when information being posted/printed is either materially or intentional inaccurate at times. I have seen a variety of articles that have been written that contain materially inaccurate information, one article in particular referencing equipment that the Lake Roland Nature Council had lent the site as being equipment being needlessly purchased for the site by Baltimore County. Or even attacks on me personally on social media related to therapeutic equine.
- I am also aware of a general frustration that exists on a number of fronts in the larger community regarding MARC's relationship with the county and the actions current and former MARC board members have taken to that end. I in no way want those actions or sentiments to taint the Maryland Equine Resource Council mission.

As a volunteer at the AG Center for a number of years, in a variety of capacities including the physical support of projects, the economic support of projects and the loan of equipment from the Lake Roland Nature Council in support of projects at that site, all actions that the AG Center site executive director Chris McCollum can expand on, my opinion is that it is best for MERC and MARC be separate entities focused on issues and initiatives that are true to their respective hearts, core competencies, organizational missions and sincere interests. In addition, I am being accused of not being transparent in the process of becoming a new council, to which I chuckle at as that I have documented offers to meet that have yet to be acted on, whether it be with MARC and their board or Councilman Kach.

Best Regards,



Jeffrey Budnitz  
Founding Board Member