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Session Wrap Up

The 2021 Session of the General Assembly is in the books – “one and done,” as they say. Our column last month laid out the legislation on which the Maryland Horse Council was active and successful. This month, we summarize other bills that passed this year and that affect the horse community.

Animal Welfare

Testing Cosmetics on Animals: Sen. Clarence Lam and Del. Terri Hill sponsored legislation this year to prohibit testing cosmetics on

animals (SB 282/HB 611). Contrary to popular belief, there is no federal ban on testing cosmetics in animals – defined as any “live, nonhuman, vertebrate” – so the matter is left to the states. The new law makes it a misdemeanor for a cosmetics manufacturer to sell, in Maryland, any cosmetic that has been tested on animals, or any cosmetic that contains any ingredient that has been tested on animals, except when such testing is required by law. The only other states in the country that currently ban the sale of cosmetics tested on animals are California, Nevada, Illinois, and Virginia.

Land Use

Ag land preservation: Sen. Ronald Young sponsored legislation to set a goal of preserving 1,030,000 acres of productive agricultural land by 2030 through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Maryland GreenPrint Program, the Rural Legacy Program, and local land preservation programs (SB 692). The new law also allows acres preserved through the Maryland Environmental Trust and the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program to be counted toward the 1,030,000-acre goal.

Fair Hill Funding: Sen. Jason Gallion introduced legislation to appropriate \$1,300,000 from the annual budget for fiscal years 2023 through 2027 for the Fair Hill Improvement Fund (SB 919). The new law appropriates the money for operation and maintenance of the physical facilities within the Special Event Zone of the Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area. The Special Event Zone is the newly designed and upgraded area that will be the venue for the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill three day event, as well as steeplechase events and other horse shows.

Thoroughbred Racing

Maryland-Bred Race Fund: Sen. Guy Guzzone introduced legislation to enlarge the Maryland-Bred Race Fund Advisory Committee to include a member recommended by the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association (SB 533). The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association is the trade association for Maryland Thoroughbred owners and trainers. The new law also clarifies that horses still qualify as Maryland-Breds if they are foaled in Maryland by a dam who later “dies, is permanently retired, or is certified by a veterinarian as unable to be bred,” provide the dam “resided in the state for at least 6 months after the

horse was foaled.” Horses that race as Maryland-breds are eligible for additional purse money from the Maryland-bred Race Fund.

Sports Wagering: The General Assembly passed long-sought legislation to legalize betting on professional and college sports, including Thoroughbred racing, and to give sports wagering licenses to almost 100 mobile and brick-and-mortar applicants (HB 940). The Maryland Jockey Club and the Maryland State Fairgrounds are guaranteed licenses for Laurel, Pimlico, and Timonium. Legalized sports wagering is expected to generate \$18 million in revenue annually, the majority of which will be used for K-12 public education.

Other

Net Metering: Del. Luke Clippinger sponsored legislation this year to double the total state-wide amount of customer-generated electricity from renewable sources that can be sold back to the energy grid, a practice known as net metering (HB 569). Previous law limited the amount of customer-generated energy that could fed back into the Maryland power grid to 1,500 megawatts (MW), with each individual customer limited to 2 MW. The new law doubles the state-wide capacity limit to 3,000 MW, which will allow many more individual customers – such as horse farms and lesson programs-- to sell power to the grid. Energy sources that are eligible for net metering include solar, wind, biomass, micro combined heat and power, fuel cell, and certain types of hydroelectric.

Balloon Releases: Del. Wayne Hartman introduced legislation to make it a misdemeanor to intentionally release a balloon into the atmosphere, or to organize a “mass balloon release” (HB 391). The new law covers any “nonporous bag of tough and light material, generally latex or mylar, whether filled or unfilled.” Downed balloons can be deadly to pets, livestock, and wildlife that ingest bits of the balloon material or the attached strings. Violations are subject to mandatory six months of community service or a \$100 dollar fine per release, or both.

Graham Equestrian Center: Del. Michelle Guyton secured \$100,000 in bond funding for the Graham Equestrian Center (GEC) in Gunpowder Falls State Park to build an indoor arena. GEC is a Horse Discovery Center and a lesson program, and it hosts numerous educational and other outreach events. Its charitable mission is “to educate the mind, improve the body and lift the spirits of local children and adults, regardless of income or (dis)ability, through the joy of horses.” One reason for the new indoor arena is to increase the number of therapeutic equine activities.

Days End Farm Horse Rescue: The Howard County delegation secured \$500,000 in bond funding for Days End Farm Horse Rescue to acquire and repurpose the adjacent Lisbon firehouse. Days End’s charitable mission is to rescue and rehabilitate suffering horses and to prevent abuse and neglect through education and community outreach. The renovations will include building an educational welcome center with interactive displays and converting an outbuilding into an equine rehabilitation medical suite.

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