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Agriculture Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes of the Chatham County Agricultural Advisory Board

Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at 7:30 pm

Held at the Small Conference Room Chatham County Agriculture Building

Attendees: Justin Brooks, Scott Bryant, Esta Cohen, Sharon Day, Cathy Jones, Judy Lessler, and Kevin Smith. **Cooperative Extension Representative:** Dan Campeau **Absent:** Bob Mowery, Joe Wachs, Robbie Walters Richard Bradley, and Henry Stinson.

Call to Order

Esta called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Approval of Minutes Prior Business:

Minutes of the May 14, 2013 were corrected and approved. Motion: Cathy; Second: Justin; Vote: Unanimous

Old Business

EDC Presentations and Opinions on Farming

Esta presented a copy of the material she presented to the EDC in response to their Conservation/Farmland Preservation Scenario, Challenges Section (copy attached). Esta noted that:

- It is incorrect to state that agriculture does not provide a living wage and full-time employment. She cited examples just from an informal polling of the Ag Board.
- Transportation is no different than for other industries
- Agriculture is continuing to grow in Chatham County. New small diversified farms purchase equipment and supplies from growing businesses
- Additional data is available that documents the importance of agriculture to Chatham County

During the discussion, it was noted that the EDC is not considering agriculture as part of the local economy. They changed their recommendation for development strategies to read as Targeted Employment and Preservation of Rural Areas. Forestry is not in their definition of working lands; however, their preservation of rural area description still includes the description of rural areas working farms and buffers are still in the discussion.

Esta asked how we get statistics on value of agriculture and forestry in Chatham County. She felt that this was important if we are to make a good case for having agriculture considered in economic development. The Ag Board agreed that this was important. Sources cited included contacting Ben Baird who is the chief Chatham County Forest Ranger, and getting forestry and commodity sales information from the Census of Agriculture. Small, scale diversified farms are

not as well represented in the Census of Agriculture. It was also noted that the NC Industrial Extension Service completely ignores agricultural based industries. Judy volunteered to research the results from the most recent Agricultural Census which was most likely conducted in 2012.

Esta noted that it is important to get farmers interested and active in protecting working lands in Chatham County. Scott volunteered to host a dinner or other event on his farm to facilitate such.

New Business

VAD Application: The application by John Brunette for Voluntary Ag District designation for Parcel # 3023 was tabled until more information is available. Most members of the board do not have information on what the rules are for approving an application and requests that Sam send out an email response with the rules and more information on the farm. We agreed that we would approve the application by email to prevent Mr. Brunette having to wait until the August Ag Board meeting. We need to know how he meets the requirements.

The following Action Items summarize our meeting:

- Tabled the VAD application
- Request Commissioner Walter Petty for representation on the EDC committee
- Assemble current statistics on agriculture in the county and direct marketing in the county, and present this to County Commissioners, with the goal of having the EDC to assist in the development of farming and agricultural industries, such as, a feed mill.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.