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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

January 9, 2018 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

Called to order, 7:00 pm

Present: Tandy Jones (Chair), Cathy Jones (Vice-Chair), Bobby Tucker (Secretary), Esta Cohen, Henry Outz (Chatham Soil and Water), Ginger Cunningham (Interim NCCES Director), Sharon Day, Terrill Ellington, Wesley Hancock, GUESTS: Phil Bradley (NC Geological Survey), Rick Bolich (NCDEQ), Jason Sullivan (Planning Director), Ann Lowry (Environmental Health Director), Diana Hales (BOC), Terry Schmidt (Environmental Review Board), George Lucier (Planning Board), Walter Petty (BOC-liason to Ag Board)

Absent: Dr. J. Dykers, Joe Wachs

1. Introduction of Guests

Tandy introduced all guests present, including Phil Bradley and Rick Bolich from NCGS and NCDEQ, respectively.

2. Groundwater Resources Presentation

Phil Bradley with the NC Geological Survey presented on the geological study underway in Chatham County since 2010. He explained how the geologic mapping will help provide the following benefits to the County:

- increase potential for finding higher flow wells that intersect faults and diabase dikes
- identify groundwater flow paths (where the water going or coming from)
- assess risk from naturally occurring groundwater contaminants (e.g., arsenic, manganese, radon)

Rick Bolich from NCDEQ presented on the basic hydrogeology of the N.C. Piedmont. Most subsurface rock is crystalline. Fractures in bedrock create storage and conveyance of groundwater. Most groundwater yield is associated with the coarse, less weathered portion at the bottom of the saprolite storage layer, but this water is more susceptible to contaminant transport. Typically, solid well casing is installed below the saprolite layer/transition zone to prevent contamination. Rick provided a recommendation on a sustainable yield of groundwater in Chatham County: 2.5 acres of land is needed for a single-bedroom home with 4 occupants (200-400 gallons per day), assuming septic system recharge.

Questions were raised about the impact of land use changes on groundwater supply with slope-aquifer systems of the Piedmont. Rick suggested that computer modeling could be used to estimate relative impacts of land cover changes and changes in groundwater withdrawals. Phil estimated that land impacts outside of 1 mile of a fault, or impacts on other side of topographic divides may not be significant. Impacts to diabase dikes will likely be impacted across longer distances.

3. Approval of November 2018 Minutes

The September minutes were reviewed and motioned to approve, and passed unanimously.

4. Update on Chatham Voluntary Agricultural District Program

Ginger, Henry, and Tandy met with Renee Paschal and developed a plan for moving forward to legitimize the VAD program. Chatham County has not kept the Farmland Conservation Ordinance up-to-date in order to comply with new state statutes for "Enhanced" VAD programs. The new statute requires that valid VAD participants must sign/receive a Conservation Agreement, a copy of the Ordinance, and the VAD application. It has been recommended to host a public outreach meeting to VAD participants to discuss the Ordinance and receive input. The group is going to propose a "grandfathering" process for allowing the existing participants to just sign the Conservation Agreement to stay in the program without reapplying. The difference in language between the state statute requirements and the existing Ordinance is significant. Next steps: (1) write a new ordinance and submit to the BOC with input from the County Attorney to comply with current state statutes, (2) determine what to do about the existing participants to keep them enrolled. Tandy, Henry, Ginger, and Renee are going to meet with the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund members to determine what is needed in the new Ordinance.

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.