



P. O. Box 1809, Pittsboro, NC 27312-1809 • Phone: (919) 542-8200 •

Agriculture Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agriculture Advisory Board

October 11, 2016 7:00 PM Ag Building

Called to order, 7:01 pm

Present: Esta Cohen (Chair), Sam Groce (NCCES), Ronnie Vaughn, Tandy Jones, Sharon Day, Bobby Tucker, Dr. J. Dykers, Terrill Ellington, Joe Wachs

Absent: Larry Harris, Cathy Jones, Thomas "Chip" Price, Walter Petty (BOC liason)

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved unanimously.

Old Business

Answers to strategic map questions: Esta provided responses to the questions posed to the planning consultants.

- What is the name of the organization that drew the map?
 - Conservation Trust for North Carolina
- What was their purpose in creating the map?
 - 1. Develop strategic approach to protect agricultural land that can supply local food to people in the Triangle
 - 2. Encourage agricultural and community economic development to increase production of and access to fresh local foods
- What was the criteria they used in rating farmland areas?
 - See slide 13. Soils, size, distance to urban areas, proximity to agricultural protected areas, surrounding population, present use value designation.
- Were these individual farms that were rated or general areas?
 - Parcels
- What effected high or low ratings?
 - See slide 14 for ratings of inputs
- Were farming practices of any consideration?
 - No

Farmer Hall of Fame: Sam is going to work on getting publicity together for application solicitation by first of next week. Closing deadline still set for January 2, 2017. Applications to be available on the county website under the Ag Advisory Board page.

Ag Building Update: Sam reported that there is still a lot of work to be done, but still planning on moving in mid-November. Future plans for old building are still undecided.

By-laws: Esta reported that the Ag Advisory Board by-laws are still in progress and plans to have them ready for review by next meeting.

New Business

1. VAD Applications – Several new applications were sent to Sam for board approval.
 - a. Roberson family tracts (total land 90.93 acres), hay, mixed vegetables, laying hens
 - i. Approved
 - b. Travis Frye farm in Bear Creek. Preapproved by Soil and Water Conservation District. Corn and soybeans (total land 122.6 acres)
 - i. Approved
 - c. Jeannette and Fred Beranger (total land 10 acres – within 10 miles of VAD)
 - i. Approved
 - d. Robert and Sandra Savage, hay and horse breeding (total land 25.37 acres)
 - i. Approved

Ag Focus Group: This is a sub-group of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee includes Esta, Tandy, Joe, Sam, and others. Chair of the Steering Committee told the Ag Focus sub-group that they are responsible for coming up with a Farmland Preservation map. Tandy conveyed to the Steering Committee that the process would require input from more people, and that the time-line was too limited to solicit input. The Comprehensive Plan consultants agreed to allow the sub-group more time. The farmland preservation map prioritized soil and water, but also requested specific mechanisms for protecting farm land. Currently, there are three voluntary mechanisms for preservation: (1) Voluntary Ag District, (2) Conservation Easements, and (3) Present-Use Value. Tandy recommended a farmland prioritization process that started with soil and water resources, then determines on a parcel basis owners that subscribe to any of the three voluntary mechanisms. Sam noted that the State of N.C. has passed laws to help farmland stay in Present-Use through ownership transitions.

Tandy's view is that long-term farmland preservation requires payment of farmers/land-owners for their development rights. The committee agreed that the biggest threats to farmland in Chatham County is residential development, although the economic livelihood of farming is the root cause of the loss of farms (leaving farmland more susceptible to development). There is re-emphasis on agriculture preservation prioritization due to the recent Comprehensive Plan survey that indicated the top concern for participants was protecting Chatham's "rural character."

Biggest question for future discussion by the Board: how to protect farm land outside of three existing preservation mechanisms? Bobby recommended that the next meeting incorporate a discussion on financial weak links and opportunities for improving economic viability of Chatham farms.

2. Next meeting: planned for November 8th meeting with option to postpone if needed.
3. Tandy mentioned that the Farms for Food Farmland Preservation Plan to be presented within the next several weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.