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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

November 13, 2018 7:30 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

Called to order, 7:45 pm

Present: Tandy Jones (Chair), Cathy Jones (Vice-Chair), Bobby Tucker (Secretary), Esta Cohen, Sharon Day, Terrill Ellington, Dr. J. Dykers, Ginger Cunningham (NCCES Director),

Absent: Walter Petty (BOC liaison), Henry Outz (SWCD liaison)

1. Introduction of Guests

No guests were present for the board meeting.

2. Agenda Approval

Tandy introduced the meeting and solicited input on the proposed agenda. No edits were suggested.

3. Discussion/Approval of Minutes

It was noted for the October meeting attendance record that Joe Wachs had previously resigned the Ag Advisory Board. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Discussion of Board Vacancies

Four applicants have applied to fill the three vacant seats on the Ag Board. Esta had already reviewed the applications to make sure they met the criteria in the Ordinance. The Board reviewed all four candidates and discussed the general approach to selecting new members and agreed upon the importance that members are actively involved in farming or make part of their living from agriculture-related enterprises. In other words, it

is important to the current Board members that new representatives have agriculture “skin in the game” in order to effectively advise on County policies.

The group also discussed the appropriate sources of information to decide an applicant’s credibility, which could be based on the application alone or also include personal knowledge/reference of the application and/or interviews. Following discussion, the Board voted to approve Tenita Solanto unanimously, and request that the other three candidates provide further explanation regarding the extent of their current farming operations. Bobby agreed to email the other applicants with this request and ask if they can provide a Schedule F form and the percentage of their gross income made from farming.

5. County Rollback Tax

Tandy mentioned the various county models in the Triangle/Triad region that have policies established to transfer “rollback” taxes from farm/forestry properties leaving the Present Use Value program (PUV). Alamance County, for example, uses rollback taxes to purchase development rights (PDRs) from legacy-oriented farmers/land-owners. Wake County on the other hand is using these taxes to invest in programs for county farmers that increase their economic viability (e.g., marketing support). Currently, Chatham County collects about \$200k each year in rollback taxes from PUV lands exiting the program. It is unknown to the Ag Board how the rollback tax monies are currently spent in Chatham County, nor does the County have a farmland preservation program like adjacent counties. According to Tandy, there can be resistance to reallocating this tax revenue. It was also noted that the on-going stewardship costs of monitoring PDRs must be considered when purchasing easements from private land-owners, but County contributions towards PDRs and transaction costs increases the likelihood of receiving additional funds from the State, USDA, or local land trusts.

The group agreed to solicit input from Commissioner Hales, who had expressed interest in this issue, on how best the Ag Board can support a change in County policy that allocates PUV rollback taxes towards farmland preservation programs. Tandy, Esta, and Bobby volunteered to meet with Ms. Hales on this topic before the next Board Meeting.

6. New Business

The discussion about hosting the County Ag Hall of Fame was reinitiated, which had previously been tabled until completion of the New Ag Building. Terrill, Chip Price, and Larry Harris had also spent time soliciting donations for the ceremony event. Terrill also suggested that the next Hall of Fame include farmers that would have been nominated during the past years when the award was not given. The Board agreed unanimously to renew their commitment to reinstating the Farmer Hall of Fame process, with further planning to ensue at the next meeting schedule for January 8, 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 9:33 pm.