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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

November 14, 2017 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

Called to order, 7:00 pm

Present: Tandy Jones (Chair), Esta Cohen, Henry Outz (Chatham Soil and Water), Ginger Cunningham (Interim NCCES Director), Sharon Day, Bobby Tucker, Dr. J. Dykers, Terrill Ellington, Cathy Jones, Joe Wachs, GUESTS: Wesley Hancock, Diana Hales (Chatham BOC), Tiffany Hancock

Absent: none

1. Approval of September 2017 Minutes

The September minutes were reviewed and edits incorporated. Motion to approve was passed unanimously.

2. Introduction of Wesley Hancock, candidate for board membership

Wesley was a guest during the initial part of the board meeting. His application was reviewed later in the meeting following his departure.

3. Election of Vice-Chair

Cathy Jones was nominated by Esta Cohen. Cathy accepted, and her position as Vice-Chair was approved unanimously by the board members.

4. Offer to meet with Rick Bolich of NCDENR

Tandy spoke with Rick Bolich of NCDENR regarding the proposed resolution for groundwater protections in Chatham County. Both Rick and his supervisor, Phil Bradley, offered to speak with the Ag Board. Rick was not aware of other counties effectively regulating groundwater supplies. The Board decided to invite Rick to a future meeting on water issues, and also invite Planning Board and Environmental Review Board chairs/representatives. Date to be determined.

Ongoing survey of geology by the NC Geological Survey is currently underway, which includes groundwater resources. Study is expected to be completed by end of next year. The end product is a completed geological map of Chatham County.

5. Discussion of draft resolution on groundwater resources

The draft resolution written at the September meeting was presented to the group for discussion, which is stated as follows:

“All new non-agricultural enterprises requiring greater than 3000 gallons of water per day must be required to be serviced by County water supply or other permitted surface water source. New agriculture-based enterprises are exempt from this requirement.”

Tandy spoke with Anne Lowry with Chatham County Environmental Health and Jason Sullivan and Cara Coppola of the Planning Department for guidance on the water supply resolution, who suggested using number of homes as the regulating metric. This was supported by Diana as the best means for regulating development through subdivision ordinances. The County government cannot regulate agricultural uses. Groundwater withdrawals are not regulated by the County or State until withdrawals become an issue to adjoining land owners (outside of Castle Haynes aquifer).

Ordinances will control future development, and indirectly will help control the groundwater withdrawals. The County is more likely to regulate subdivision size instead of water withdrawals. Bobby emphasized that the draft resolution was intended to be based on permitted onsite wastewater demands.

The final resolution regarding groundwater resources proposed and approved unanimously by the Board is stated as follows:

“Be it resolved, in order to protect agriculture and the rural character of Chatham County, the Agricultural Advisory Board recommends that all new Major Subdivisions be required to use public water supply to protect groundwater.”

6. Discussion of new board candidates

There are currently eight members on the Board, with one vacancy, although fifteen members are still required by the Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance. The Board has been operating with nine members for the past few years, Dr. Dykers motioned to lower the number of Board members to nine, which was approved unanimously. Terms expiring in 2018 include Sharon, Dr. Dykers, and Terrill. Six applications were presented to the Board for review for the one vacant position.

The board unanimously approved Wesley Hancock to join the Ag Advisory Board. Esta suggested that Debra Henzey send a thank you letter to the other applicants for applying, and encourage them to attend the board meetings as guests to determine if they want to reapply later.

7. Delegation for representation of the board

Esta reminded the Board that the Chair, or his/her delegates, can speak for the Board at public meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.