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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

February 13, 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), Henry Outz (Chatham Soil and Water), Ginger Cunningham (NCCES Director), Sharon Day, Terrill Ellington, Wesley Hancock, Dr. J. Dykers, Joe Wachs, Walter Petty (BOC liaison) GUESTS: Natalie Hummel

Absent: Esta Cohen

1. Agenda Discussion

Tandy welcomed everyone and solicited input regarding the agenda. No changes suggested.

2. Introduction of Guests

All members present introduced themselves and their district location. Natalie Hummel from the Apex (NE District) was in attendance. She previously lived in the county, and recently returned from working in Germany and now looking to get involved locally. Natalie is a former professor at LSU in entomology, now works at Bayer Crop Science.

3. Approval of January 2018 Minutes

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

4. Tasks and timeline for updating Chatham Voluntary Agricultural District

Tandy presented the timeline of steps developed following a conference call with representatives from the NC Farmland Preservation (NC ADFP) Trust, and further modified during the meeting:

1. A letter will be sent in March from Cooperative Extension and Soil & Water which explain the following: (1) state laws have changes to the VAD programs, (2) Ag Adv. Board, County Attorney, and BOC will review proposed changes to the county ordinance as a result, (3) Current VAD participants do not need to reapply but must sign a conservation agreement (draft provided with letter), and (4) VAD participants will have the opportunity to provide comments to the Ag Advisory Board and NC ADFP prior to a final informational/renewal session.
2. Draft review by Henry, Ginger, Tandy, Register of Deeds, and Planning Director.
3. Draft review by Ag Board
4. Send to BOC for draft approval
5. Public hearing (if required)
6. Final BOC approval (if required)
7. Informational sessions for current and aspiring VAD participants will be hosted with Ag Adv. Board, Extension, Soil & Water, County Attorney, NC ADFP for questions and signing of conservation agreements.

a. Discussion

Input was solicited regarding additions to the VAD application and conservation agreement. Ginger and Henry noted that the conservation agreement is “set in stone”, and thus public input is not really warranted. It was noted that the conservation agreement allows participants to exit the program anytime within 30 days of notice. Ginger suggested that the conservation agreement require the participant properties to be listed in the Register of Deeds. Others noted how this was part of the original intent so realtors can inform future home buyers to help protect adjoining farmers. Henry indicated that the County might be willing to pay for the registration fee (about \$25/deed) with approval by BOC.

Cathy pointed out that the VAD current protects participants from being required to be serviced/charged for public water, although the County currently requires property owners in general to be serviced by public water. Ginger also recommended that adding language to protect participants from nuisance claims would also update the conservation agreement to be concurrent with NC General Statutes.

Changes were made to the proposed timeline to reduce number of public meetings, as incorporated in the above.

5. New Business

Tandy emphasized the importance of the Ag Advisory Board keeping up-to-date with the various issues potentially impacting the agricultural community. He suggested having other guest speakers present at the meeting, particularly those from various agricultural interests and sectors. The group agreed that this was a good idea and will continue brainstorming ideas for guest speakers.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.