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## *Agriculture Advisory Board*

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### **FINAL Minutes**

#### Agriculture Advisory Board

September 12, 2017 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

**Called to order**, 7:02 pm

**Present:** Esta Cohen (Chair), Henry Outz (Chatham Soil and Water), Ginger Cunningham (Interim NCCES Director), Tandy Jones, Sharon Day, Bobby Tucker, Dr. J. Dykers, Terrill Ellington, Joe Wachs,

**Absent:** Cathy Jones

## Approval of August 2017 Minutes

The August minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously by members present.

## Old Business

### 1. Resolutions to the Board of Commissioners regarding the Zoning Ordinance/Land Use Policy

Dr. Dykers proposed an initial resolution to protect ground water supply for farmers, stated as:

*“All new housing and commercial developments must be required to have County water supply.”*

A group discussion was subsequently held, with the following main arguments.

- The Ag Advisory Board is very concerned about the use of ground water demands for future housing developments.
- Most farmers do not want requirements to connect to County water. As currently written, VAD farms are not required to connect.

**Question:** How is this protected from future changes?

- It was noted that the County has the ability to guide future land use changes through the planned extensions of water and sewer infrastructure.
- Limiting the size of development that existing farm lands can be converted to is considered a “taking” of property.
- Other uses, including industrial agriculture operations are also considered a threat to underground water supplies and should be considered, but mandated to use County water supply for new or existing enterprises.
- Henry recommended using volume as a metric for water supply protections. Estimates of reasonable water demands for various farms operations and residential subdivisions were discussed.

Following group discussion, a modified draft resolution was proposed by the board members present. Dr. Dykers motioned to approve modified draft resolution, which was approved unanimously. The final resolution will be approved as part of the meeting minutes during the next board meeting in November. The draft resolution states:

*“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.”*

## 2. Chatham Farm Conservation Ordinance

### **Letter to VAD Applicants**

The letter to future applicants to the Voluntary Ag District (VAD) Program regarding the postponement of approving applications. A conservation agreement needs to be established and signed by previous VAD participants. In other words, the 200-250 farmers currently in the do not have a valid conservation agreement. Tandy expressed concern than many of the participants may not re-apply when asked to do so per the State regulations. The County Board of Commissioners will likely need to approve the new conservation agreement once drafted and finalized. Future VAD applications can't be accepted until the Ag Conservation Ordinance is completed, reviewed by the new NCCES Director, and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

## **Ag Advisory Board Vacancy**

The board reviewed the letter posted by the County advertising a vacancy on the Ag Board from the southeast region of the County. No potential candidates for this opening were mentioned.

## **New Business**

### **1. Elections:**

Bobby Tucker was nominated and approved unanimously to remain as Secretary since no one else wants this position. Tandy was nominated and accepted to take over as Chair for the Board with the stipulation that the Vice Chair position was also filled. Selection of a Vice Chair position was tabled for the next Board meeting. Gratitude was expressed by all in attendance to Esta Cohen for extraordinary service for five years as Chair of the Board. It was also suggested that future VAD applicants are expected to participate as part of the Ag Advisory Board.

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.