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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

February 12, 2019 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), Esta Cohen, Brenda Williams (Chatham Soil and Water Conservation District), Sharon Day, Dr. John Dykers, Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Tenita Solanto, Emily Moose (Planning Board liaison) GUESTS: Ashley Heger, Margaret Sands, Mary Trosclair (Chatham Food Policy Council)

Absent: Terrill Ellington, Walter Petty (BOC liaison)

1. Introduction of Guests

Tandy introduced Ashley Heger (coordinator for Orange County Food Council) and Margaret Sands (conservation manager for Triangle Land Conservancy). Both guests were asked to join regarding the discussion on a possible Chatham Farmland Preservation program. Brenda Williams was also introduced as the new interim representative from the Chatham Soil and Water Conservation District, replacing Susannah Goldston.

2. Agenda Review and Approval

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

3. County PUV Policy – Experiences from Other Counties

Ashley Heger discussed the work conducted by the Orange County Food Council (OCFC) on a local PUV program. The OCFC has developed a broad mission and representation from diverse roles in their local food system to grow and support the local food and farm economy. They have developed a PUV policy brief with

funding proposal, and currently working to refine and approve the policy proposal with County Commissioners. They initially hosted Strategic Advocacy Plan to prioritize PUV actions. OCFC used Cabarrus County as an example for process, including the use of interns for initial research, gap/opportunity analysis, record collection from County tax office, and power mapping (identify allies and barriers). They hope to earmark PUV roll-back funds to be reinvested into local food system initiatives and programs including those dedicated to farmland preservation and improving capital access to farmers. The initiative also proposes to measure outcomes to show success and improve future investments. Less than 0.1% is currently received into the County budget from the PUV program. OCFC are also trying to set aside a program for emergency funds to farmers. In general, they are recommending the strategic use of the funds to help the County meet the goals of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and 2009 Ag Development and Farmland Protection Plan. Additional benefits presented to the County includes money savings, leading innovation in the region, supporting local ag and food businesses, and protecting farmland and watersheds.

Margaret Sands presented background on Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) and their current projects. They currently have 18,500 acres preserved, including about 4,500 acres of farmland. TLC has focused conservation easements in Chatham County around Silk Hope, which mirrors the County's Comprehensive Plan. Current sources of funding for PDR's include NC Ag Development and Farmland Preservation Program, USDA Ag Land Easement (ALE), Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and the Triangle Community Foundation (transaction costs up to \$25k; 1 project per fiscal year). All these funding sources require matching funds, which is mostly leveraged from local Counties. Margaret presented on the following projects:

- Wake County – Open Space Bond: \$120M; goal to protect 30% of County open area
- Orange County Lands Legacy: 3,475 acres preserved; County reviewed projects on case-by-case basis;
- Durham County: \$500k for open space preservation; Open Space staff prioritizes the Farmland Preservation Program; 2,140 acres of farmland conserved; collaborates with land trusts to encourage priority projects
- Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative: managed by City of Raleigh with coordination from Conservation Trust for NC; funded by water utility fees; 10,413 acres protected; 7:1 leverage ratio for Raleigh
- Alamance County: working group of Alamance County Ag Advisory Board reviews and allocates funding each year; offers up to 25% of program costs to match state or other funding resources
- Cabarrus County: County Commissioners designated all rollback taxes towards a fund to promote ag development

Margaret presented a table of Chatham County rollback taxes that showed 48% of land in the county is enrolled in PUV. She also showed transaction costs for a 13.8 acre donated easement that was about \$33k to cover surveys, appraisals, legal fees, etc. The project was not funded because it was too much of a financial burden on the landowner. Cathy asked if rollback taxes must be paid for conservation easement lands, which Margaret said that sometimes this is the case.

4. Planning Board Update

Emily Moose provide an update from the Planning Board. She mentioned that the Commissioners have been working on issues related to the moratorium on oil and gas exploration. The Planning Board voted on

recommendations that allows many of the activities associated with oil/gas in any zoning district with conditional use permit. This process allows the County to better oppose a potential pre-emption case by the NC Oil and Gas Commission. A special study will need to be performed with conditional use permit process. Additional recommendations to the Commissioners were provided via a handout.

Jason Sullivan mentioned to the Planning Board that the RFP is currently out for the Unified Development Ordinance. The Planning Board recommended to the Commissioners that the consultant team include someone with experience with agriculture policy (or an “ag specialist”).

The Planning Board has also been receiving feedback from County citizens who are concerned about the density of development from recently proposed projects.

5. Discussion/Approval of Minutes

Tandy overviewed the edits he made to the minutes after receiving from Bobby. The minutes with suggested edits were approved unanimously.

6. Update on Hall of Fame

A previous hall of fame application was found. Dr. Dykers spoke with both Sam Groce and Mountaire about contributing to the banquet, both of whom committed support. Terrill was not present for the meeting, so further discussion was postponed.

7. Discussion on Draft VAD Ordinance from County Attorney

Tandy solicited written comments to forward on to the County Attorney. A question was raised about a separate version that has been commented on since the August 8 version sent by Jep. Tandy will clarify the correct version and report back to the Board. Esta mentioned several inconsistencies between the Ag Boards intended ordinance and Jep’s edits, including the designation of four VAD “districts” instead of regions that provides somewhat confusing inconsistencies with some language throughout the document.

8. New Business

The next meeting is scheduled for March 12th, with a plan to skip the April meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.