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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

June 11, 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, Sharon Day, Dr. Tenita Solanto, Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Susannah Goldston (CSWCD Director), Andy Wilkie (BOC liaison) **GUESTS:** Michelle Faircloth (Chatham County Tax Office), Bria Berry (intern for Chatham County Council of Aging), Ben Shields

Absent: John Dykers

1. Introduction of Guests

Tandy acknowledged the recent passing of Ag Board member Terrill Ellington and expressed words of remembrance, gratitude, and thoughts for his family and friends. Commissioner Wilkie suggested sending Terrill's family a card from the Ag Board.

2. Agenda Review and Approval

Tandy suggested that we add Ms. Berry's presentation following Ms. Faircloth's discussion. The revised agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Present Use Value Program Audit

Ms. Faircloth described the upcoming auditing of the PUV program. County residents have contacted the tax office expressing concern and inquiry. The State Statute requires each County to evaluate all parcels within the PUV program every eight (8) years. The County intends to get to a four-year review cycle. The audit entails review of all the parcel files in the program, starting with the properties with longest time period since their

last audit. The Tax Office's plan is to review ¼ of all parcels each year for the next four years. Ms. Faircloth mentioned that onsite reviews are conducted for all audits, although most land owners are unaware of the visit unless there is a problem with the audit. If potential disqualifications are noticed during the review, the landowner is sent an inquiry for more information. If a landowner is disqualified from the program, they are assessed for back-taxes from the previous three years. Ms. Faircloth provided the Ag Board an information handout on the PUV compliance reviews and audits.

Several board members inquired about the proposal to allocate PUV rollback taxes for a County farmland preservation program. Ms. Faircloth confirmed that the rollback taxes go to the General Fund and are not currently ear-marked for specific purposes.

4. Community Ambassador Program

Ginger introduced Bria Berry and the work she is doing to better connect seniors and underserved populations in the county with available resources. Ms. Berry is interning and recruiting for the Community Ambassador program to be the connectors between available services and their respective community groups. They are targeting a diversity of ambassadors, including aging members from the farming community. Ms. Berry provided a handout to the Ag Board for further information on the Community Ambassador Program. Sharon inquired about the services that are relevant to the aging farming community.

5. Discussion/Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to vote on approval. The minutes were approved unanimously.

6. New Applicant Recommendations

In addition to the three vacant positions, Terrill's recent passing has created a fourth open position. Tandy reminded the Board that five members voted for the three candidates that were recommended by the Board members at the last meeting (which didn't have a quorum). Sharon motioned to formally approve the three recommended members: Ben Shields, Douglas Burleson, and Sarah Justice. The Ag Board approved all recommendations unanimously to proceed for County Commissioner approval. The Board decided to wait until August to review additional candidates for the fourth vacant position.

7. Voluntary Ag District (VAD) Ordinance Committee Report

Esta presented her opinion of the current Ordinance. Although the Ordinance does not include all of the provisions originally proposed to provide more autonomy for the Ag Board, Esta felt that it is a good Ordinance and improvements can be incorporated later with recommendation and approval from the BOC. Cathy motioned to send the current Ordinance to the BOC with the Ag Boards approval. The motion was passed unanimously.

8. Discussion of Officers and By-Laws

Tandy mentioned that he and Ginger has previously solicited examples of by-laws for other Ag Advisory Boards to use to develop the by-laws for Chatham's board. The Board decided to postpone the discussion of new officers until the end of the calendar year.

9. New Business

Cathy brought up the Ag Hall of Farm topic. Esta mentioned that the Board lost a lot of the connections to the potential Hall of Fame recipients with Terrill's passing. Esta also mentioned the need to develop criteria for helping determine qualifications for recognition. Cathy suggested that we form an Advisory Committee, comprised of previous Board members, to help determine nominations for farmers who have contributed to the betterment of Chatham agriculture. Ginger offered to ask Tommy Emerson – the original supported behind the Ag Hall of Fame – about ideas for sponsorship and nominations.

Sharon mentioned the idea to invite speakers regarding cutting edge ideas in regenerative agriculture, include agroforestry and perennial farm techniques. The Board agreed to bring ideas to the August meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.