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Agricultural Advisory Board

FINAL Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

October 8, 2019 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

Called to order, 7:00 pm

Present: Tandy Jones (Chair), Bobby Tucker (Secretary), Doug Burleson, Sharon Day, Ben Shields, Tenita Solanto, Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Susannah Goldston (CSWCD Director), GUESTS: none

Absent: Cathy Jones (Vice-Chair), Sarah Justice, Andy Wilkie (BOC liaison)

1. Agenda Review and Approval

Tandy proposed to insert one item to Susannah's agenda item (Memorandum of Understanding for County/municipality VAD agreement). The revised agenda was approved unanimously.

2. Discussion/Approval of Minutes

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

3. VAD Applications

Susannah provided a summary sheet with all 21 VAD applicants that have submitted applications to date. Soil and Water staff had previously reviewed the eligibility of each applicant and noted that two parcels were not valid because portions of the parcels occur within the Goldston municipal boundary. The Ag Board decided to perform a batch approval of all the valid applicants in lieu of a one-at-a-time approach. Tandy recused himself from voting on the applicant approvals since he is one of the applicants. The Board approved all applicants unanimously.

Susannah also summarized the MOU template that will be used for municipalities to allow VAD participation with municipal boundaries. Pending approval, the County attorney will review the MOU, which will then be submitted to each municipal council meeting within the County for final approval. The Ag Board will vote on approval of the MOU at the November meeting.

4. Report on By-Laws Drafting

Ben provided an update on the drafting of the Ag Board by-laws. He removed all language referencing the required “clerk” position. Ben did clarify language regarding the definition of a “quorum”. The Board agreed to set the definition of a quorum as a majority of total Ag Board membership, which would currently be a 5-member minimum present to conduct voting procedures.

5. Report on Food Policy Joint Committee

Bobby provided an update on the Joint Committee’s proposal to the BOC for committed funds to implement strategies that protect working farm lands and improve the economic viability of farm businesses. Ginger expressed that most BOC members will want to provide input on the selection of priority actions, and to be specific about soliciting funds for farmlands (in particular) versus “land banking” in general.

6. Update on UDO Presentation for November 12 Meeting

The Planning Department is planning to present to all the County Boards on the upcoming UDO process. They have also invited members from the Silk Hope Ruritans, Farm Bureau, and the Chatham Agribusiness Council. The meeting will be held at the Ag Building conference room.

Tandy was also asked by the Triangle Land Conservancy to present to the Board on farmland preservation options and solicited input from the Board on whether to include another presentation at the November meeting. The Board agreed to postpone the TLC presentation to the following Ag Board meeting in January.

7. Board Member Applications

Eight (8) new Ag Board applications were submitted since the last meeting although the application deadline is still open. The Board will review the applications prior to the next meeting and vote then.

8. New Business

Susannah mentioned that the Jordan Lake Nutrient Rules are being reinitiated. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation is looking to meet with farmers regarding their input. Susannah will keep the Board updated on the schedule for the meeting.

9. Board Member Farm Presentations

Sharon presented on Mellow Marsh Farm that started growing wetland plants for restoration projects. They have expanded into a range of native plants, live stakes, and seeds, from grass through trees. She overviewed their operation, including markets, labor, and challenges. Seed foraging is one of her favorite aspects of her operation.

Tenita talked about Green Panda Farms in Siler City that produces micro-greens. She started almost 4 years ago, which was learning process that began with little production experience. They now produce other greens and herbs as a lower price-point alternative to local customers. They are now utilizing hydroponic systems for

their non micro-green produce crops. Student and veteran education is also an important part of their mission.

Ben talked about Good Heart Farm that produces uncertified-organic vegetables. They market through a 75-member CSA, two farmer's markets, and several local restaurants. He has recently been getting into nutrient density and soil re-mineralization with good results. They now own and farm Bill Dow's Century Farm that was the first certified organic farm in NC. They would like to expand their fruit production and incorporate more wildlife areas.

The next meeting is proposed for November 12th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.