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Agricultural Advisory Board

DRAFT Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

January 18, 2020 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center)

Called to order, 7:00 pm

Present: Ben Shields (Chair), Bobby Tucker (Secretary), Sharon Day, Tandy Jones, Tenita Solanto, Doug Burleson, Christopher Hart, Susannah Goldston (CSWCD Director), Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director) **GUESTS:** LeeAnn Hammerbacher (Triangle Land Conservancy); Emily Moose (Planning Board liaison); Caroline Siverson (Planning Board), Cee Stanley (Green Heffa Farms)

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

1. Introduction of Guests

All attendees present introduced themselves to the group.

2. Agenda Review and Approval

No changes to the agenda were motioned and the agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Presentation by Leigh Ann Hammerbacher (Triangle Land Conservancy)

Leigh Ann provided an overview of the conservation work being done by TLC in Chatham County. Of the 20,000 acres currently preserved by TLC, 5,000 of them are farmland. The primary conservation projects in Chatham include White Pines (1987), Haw River State Natural Area (2004), Lindale Farm (2015), and Yahoo Forest (2019). TLC's priority areas are where conservation value meets leverage of resources. Land in Chatham is primarily being preserved via private landowners (including the PUV program), non-profits, State and County lands, local municipalities, private mitigation groups, HOA's. These lands are preserved through

purchase (fee simple), conservation easements, assists, land banking, and open space set asides. TLC has been focusing farmland conservation in Chatham within the Silk Hope area.

Options for funding conservation include land-owners w/ conservation interest, and monies from local, state, and federal programs, including NC Ag Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, USDA Ag Land Easement, Clean Water Mgt Trust Fund, and Triangle Community Foundation. All these funding sources require a match. The primary local programs include open space bonds, which have been approved throughout the U.S. with multiple benefits to local communities and increased land/home values. Both Orange and Wake counties have passed bonds recently for open space preservation. Counties also budget annual appropriations for open space preservation, including both Durham and Alamance (\$250k per year allocated). Cabarrus County designates all rollback taxes for ag development and farm preservation.

Other funding programs include source water protection, such as the Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative that is funded by water utility fees. The Jordan Lake Watershed Conservation Strategy has a goal to protect 35,000 acres over the next 35 years.

4. Review and Approval of Minutes

The November minutes were minor edits. The amended minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Vote on Draft By-Laws

Ben reviewed the final edits he made to the by-laws. Additional minor edits were proposed by the Board. The by-laws were approved unanimously and adopted as final.

6. VAD Applications

Susannah provided a summary sheet with the new VAD applicants, consisting of 18 new applications comprising 53 parcels. Of these, 43 parcels are eligible with a total of 1,579 acres. The ineligible parcels were either in the Pittsboro or Siler City ETJs, and it is currently being evaluated by the County attorney if ETJ parcels can enter the VAD program. All eligible parcels were approved unanimously.

7. Report on Ag Hall of Fame

Cathy wasn't present for the meeting to discuss the Hall of Fame so the discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

8. Report from Food Policy Joint Committee

Tandy reported on the Joint committee meeting with Ashely Heger – coordinator for Orange County Food Council. They met to discuss strategies for moving forward with creating an Ag Development program with the County. Tandy reminded the group of the BOC's intent to allocate funding from Article 46 for farm preservation in the County. The Joint committee is working on a presentation to the BOC that better defines what a potential program would entail.

9. New Business

Susannah mentioned two upcoming events: the JLOW stakeholder meeting is tomorrow evening in Alamance. On March 10th, the ADFP Trust Fund is hosting an informational meeting at the Chatham Ag Building.

10. Presentation by Board Members on Personal Farm Operations

Both Bobby and Ginger presented on their farm operations, both of whom raise livestock part-time. Cee also presented on her help operation near Liberty.

The next meeting is planned for March 10th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm.