



P. O. Box 1809, Pittsboro, NC 27312-1809 • Phone: (919) 542-8200 •

## *Agriculture Advisory Board*

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### **DRAFT Minutes**

#### Agriculture Advisory Board

July 13, 2021 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center) & Zoom  
remote video

**Called to order**, 7:03 pm

**Present:** Tenita Solanto (Chair), Cathy Jones (Vice Chair), Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Sharon Day, Chris Hart, Ben Shields (Secretary), Caroline Siverson (Planning Board), Hunter Glenn (CC Planning Dept.)

**Absent:** Jim Crawford (BOC liaison), Doug Burleson, Jeanette Beranger, Jeff Vaughan, Brandy Oldham (CC Soil & Water Conservation District), Susannah Goldston (CC Soil & Water Conservation District)

#### 1. Introduction of Guests

Tenita introduced Caroline from the Chatham County Planning, who is presenting on how the

Planning Board will move forward with the Subdivision Well Subcommittee's findings after their July 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## 2. Approval of Minutes

No changes were made, Chris motioned to approve the agenda, Cathy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Planning Board Subdivision Well Subcommittee presentation

Caroline shared how the sub-committee presented their findings to the Planning Board at their July 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. She and Hunter gave the same presentation they shared with the Ag Board in June and wrote up the summary and recommendations. They emphasized how little data and information is available on Chatham County hydrogeology.

The main recommendations are as follows;

1. That the County partner with the USGS to fund a study to determine the sustainable level of groundwater use in different areas of the county.
2. That the county utilize the upcoming UDO process to explore the feasibility of creating Conservation/Agricultural subdivisions and/or Agricultural Zoning Districts as recommended by the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that future residential development does not conflict with continued agricultural production.

Hunter explained they had a preliminary meeting with officials from the local USGS office and they should have a specific proposal ready for consideration late in the summer. Caroline stated the Planning Board will then approach the Board of Commissioners with the proposal and will want the Ag Board to lend a show of support then. She said the study is needed to understand water availability in wells and stream recharge rates and possibly water quality.

Cathy stated she attended the July 6<sup>th</sup> Planning Board meeting and that several adjacent counties have completed similar groundwater studies. She then asked if we can access those reports from Orange Co., Wake Co., and Guilford Co.? Hunter shared that the Wake Co. study is

available in the sub-committee web page links. Hunter then stated the study may take up to 5 years to complete and the USGS may offset 40% to 50% of the cost. Hunter also shared that the Wake County study costed around \$1.5 million, and he will look into the costs of other similar studies in less wealth counties, such as Avery and possibly others.

Cathy stated because of limited legal restrictions available to the County, how do we prevent more damage to agricultural land and open spaces in the 5 year timeframe? Caroline responded we need to look at ordinances to tighten up as perhaps we can't wait for the UDO and are some short-term fixes may be available? Hunter said the UDO is on an accelerated time table of 2 to 4 years and that there are limits to how the UDO regulations on subdivisions as state law precedes local law. Caroline stated that we can try to incorporate agricultural subdivisions into the UDO with more restrictions.

All subcommittee meetings were remote and the minutes, presentations and recommendations are available for viewing online at

<https://www.chathamcountync.gov/government/departments-programs/planning/planning-board/planning-board-subcommittees/planning-board-well-subcommittee>

Tenita asked what are the actionable items here? Sharon suggested being proactive while waiting for the USGS proposal and to keep water high on the list of AAB priorities. Chris stated he thought there isn't much we can do now. Cathy suggested reading ground water studies from nearby counties and to read up on how other places are dealing with water issues. Cathy added the hydrogeology presentations made a big impact on her and to view them if we haven't, via the subcommittee web page links. Caroline added that water budgeting and planning will likely become important issues in the near future.

#### 4. Planning Board Liaison

Caroline volunteered to be the liaison between the Planning Board and the Agricultural Advisory Board. She said she will do here best to attend all the Ag Board meetings.

## 5. CC Agricultural Center Phase II update

Ginger shared how the phase II feasibility study will be moving forward with Hunden Strategic Partners Inc. and that the county will be meeting with them this week. Ginger will share the agreed upon development timeframe and will ask the AAB for feedback.

## 6. Farmland Preservation Plan update

Ginger said the FPP is in a holding pattern and that the county is getting ready to ask for bids. She suggested that action items in the FPP could include ground water studies and regulations. Ginger also suggested Article 46 funds could be applied to the agricultural community and not just schools and that the AAB be proactive with various resources.

## 7. Officer Elections for Fiscal year 2022

Tenita and Ginger stated it was time to formally elect officers for the 2022 fiscal year as this was the first meeting of that year. The current officers were asked to continue for another year and all agreed; Tenita Solanto as Chairperson, Cathy Jones as Vice-chair and Ben Shields as Secretary. Ben motioned to approve the election, Sharon seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

## 8. New Business

Sharon asked for clarification of the Ag Boards priorities and suggested we may find these in past meeting minutes. Cathy asked when this may have occurred? To which Sharon responded it was during Tandy Jones tenure as Chair. Ben volunteered to seek out the old Farmland Preservation Plan to find the actionable items and priorities suggested therein.

Tenita asked if we wish to have future guest speakers, perhaps related to agricultural developments? Sharon suggested we look at the agricultural section of the Plan Chatham website for an example of an agricultural friendly subdivision. Sharon then asked who could speak more on this subject? Caroline said she will ask Jason Sullivan and Hunter Glenn of the Planning Department.

## 9. Next Meeting

Tenita asked if we wish to meet in person at the next meeting. Folks responded they wished to keep it virtual with so many members out at this meeting and to vote on the issue at the next meeting.

Tenita motioned to meet Tuesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, Cathy seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Tenita motioned to adjourn; Cathy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.