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Agriculture Advisory Board

DRAFT Minutes

Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting

September 14, 2021, at 7:00 PM

Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center & Zoom Remote Video

Tenita called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Present: Tenita Solanto (Chair), Cathy Jones (Vice Chair), Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Sharon Day, Caroline Siverson (Planning Board), Brandy Oldham (CC Soil & Water Conservation District), Susannah Goldston (CC Soil & Water Conservation District), Doug Burleson, Jeanette Beranger, Jeff Vaughan, Nita Dukes (Public Attendee)

Absent: Jim Crawford (BOC Liaison), Chris Hart, Ben Shields (Secretary)

1. Roll Call

Tenita did a roll call of all those in attendance at tonight's meeting. Attendance listed above. Brandy and Susannah will act as secretary in Ben's absence.

2. Approval of Minutes

No changes were suggested for July meeting minutes. Sharon motioned to approve the minutes as presented, Doug seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Celebration of Cattle

Brandy gave an update on the status of the Celebration of Cattle proclamation that was sent to the Board of Commissioners earlier this year. The Board of Commissioners adopted the proclamation at their meeting on August 16th, 2021. Cathy asked if there was a way to share this widely with the public, such as through the newspaper. Brandy and Susannah will send the proclamation to Chatham County's Public Information Office, Kara Dudley, to be shared via social media and hopefully the newspaper as well. If there are questions associated with the proclamation, the board decided it would be best for Jeanette to be the contact person from the board.

4. Voluntary Agricultural District Program Updates

Brandy presented all reviewed VAD applications. There were two parcels that are not currently eligible as they are located in the Pittsboro ETJ. Several applications are still being reviewed and will be presented as soon as their reviews are finalized. Board discussed these applications. After discussions, Cathy motioned to approve all eligible parcels/applications. Sharon seconded. Motion carries.

Susannah shared the upcoming VAD survey and ordinance changes that are being reviewed. Survey is due on the 17th and Susannah is attending a Q&A regarding the ordinance changes tomorrow, September 15th, in order to get clarification before moving forward with revisions to our ordinance. It appears that most of the changes are simply verbiage edits, but the revision would need to go through the Agriculture Advisory Board, the Board of Commissioners, and the county attorney prior to being implemented. It could be possible that parcels located in any NC ETJ may become eligible to be approved into VAD. It was suggested that if the board had any revisions they would like to add, now would be the time to discuss. None noted.

Brandy gave an update regarding VAD outreach and an overview of spending so far. Susannah stated that if further outreach is needed, an increase to the budget would be needed to keep up with the cost of the mailings. Cathy moved that the Agriculture Advisory Board recommended to add this line item to the budget next year in the amount of \$1,500.00. Sharon seconded this motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Agriculture Center Phase II Updates | RFP & Services Study

Ginger shared a few updates on the phase II feasibility study. The RFP will be finalized this week and plans are to release it next week. The RFP will be up for a month to give consultants time to apply and be placed in a queue and vetted prior to a final decision.

The Hunden Strategic Partners are still reaching out to stakeholders. Ginger asked if Tenita has received correspondence from Hunden Strategic Partners? Tenita has not. Ginger will follow up with them. We anticipate receiving the data back by the end of the calendar year.

Ginger also shared that there is a small business grant through Economic Development Corporation with a deadline approaching that may be of special interest to the agriculture community. The small business grant is approximately \$75,000.00 overall and can be awarded in amounts ranging from \$1,500.00 up to \$5,000.00. Priority points are going to agribusiness and agriculture. (<https://www.chathamcdc.org/news/applications-open-for-chatham-edc-small-business-fund/>) Applicants may apply online or pick up a physical copy at the Chatham County Cooperative Extension office.

6. New Business

Susannah shared applications through email regarding the posting to fill Bobby's term. Applications were shared earlier today so this is a preliminary discussion to decide how to proceed with choosing an applicant. Sharon suggested that everyone go through the applications on their own and choose their top 1-2 choices to bring to the board. This was discussed and it was decided that the board would review the applicants on their own and Tenita will send out a poll in a day or two for the board members to select their top choice

candidate. After all choices are submitted, if there is a tie the board will move forward with interviewing the candidates via phone due to COVID safety precautions.

Sharon brought up the desire to do more outreach regarding agriculture in the county. The board discussed ways to do this including writing articles to be included in the Cooperative Extension's Growing Chatham Newsletter. Board members will work with Tiffany Hancock to write content for the newsletter. Jeanette will be the first to draft an article for the Growing Chatham newsletter, Tenita after that. Decide at the next board meeting what to highlight going forward.

Ginger shared a new application that is being developed called Visit NC Farms. They are currently accepting people to apply, farms, restaurants, etc. but they must meet requirements to be included. You can download the app to your phone.

7. Next Meeting

Sharon stated that our next meeting date would be Tuesday, October 12th. This follows our current schedule. Board was in agreement.

Tenita called for a motion to adjourn. Sharon motioned, Cathy seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.