



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

## *Agricultural Advisory Board*

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### **FINAL Minutes**

#### Agricultural Advisory Board

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 7:00 PM CCACC (Chatham County Agriculture Conference Center) & Zoom  
remote video

**Called to order;** 7:05 pm

**Present:** Cathy Jones (Vice Chair), Ginger Cunningham (NCCES County Director), Sharon Day, Doug Burleson, Ben Shields (Secretary), Brandy Oldham (CC Soil & Water Conservation District), Susannah Goldston (CC Soil & Water Conservation District), Chris Hart, Jeff Vaughan, Caroline Siverson (Planning Board liaison), Amy Fulford

**Absent:** Tenita Solanto (Chair), Jeanette Beranger

#### 1. Roll Call

Present members identified themselves.

## 2. Introduction of New Member

Amy Fulford introduced herself as a long-time resident of Chatham County. Amy and her family own and operate Brooks Compost in Goldston. As such she knows quite a few folks involved in regional agriculture and landscaping. Amy wants to make progress supporting agriculture in Chatham County as a board member.

## 3. Approval of Minutes

Amy wanted to know if there had been any follow-up with White & Smith LLC regarding progress of the Unified Development Ordinance. Ginger responded that at a recent department head meeting she learned that UDO progress is being made and there are no updates to share otherwise. Cathy asked if Amy had tried viewing the [recodechathamnc.org](http://recodechathamnc.org) website? Amy responded that the web address did not work. Ginger pointed out that the website address listed in the draft minutes was incorrect. The correct address is [www.recodechathamnc.org](http://www.recodechathamnc.org).

Cathy asked if Caroline can share any updates as a member of the Planning Board. Caroline shared that the Planning Board now has a UDO sub-committee to work directly with the UDO consulting team. The next sub-committee meeting is in early March and Caroline will share what happens at our next meeting.

Chris pointed out that he was present at the last meeting. Cathy asked that the [recodechathamnc.org](http://recodechathamnc.org) website address be corrected.

Chris motioned to approve the November minutes with the above changes. Doug seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## 4. Voluntary Agricultural District Update

Brandy shared that Joel Trimnal has recently joined the Soil and Water District staff and helped update the VAD application list with highly erodible soil data analysis. 10 applications with 30 parcels, totaling in 1448.42 acres were up for approval. There were no questions regarding the

applications. Sharon motioned to approve all applications; Doug seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 5. Ag Center RFP & Cost of Service Study update

Ginger shared that the County has approved working with the Mount Olive College consulting team to conduct the studies and expects to pass along an agreement to the county attorney for finalization. Ginger said she expects the study process to begin sometime in April or May before the fiscal year ends.

Soon after, the Mount Olive team will meet with the Ag Board to gain input and to share their methods and data. Ginger expects the team to tackle the Ag Center feasibility study first and then the Cost of Services Study afterwards. Ginger shared that Drs. Olive and Maddox have recently completed a Cost of Services study for Wilson County and she hopes that an updated Cost of Services study will help Chatham County develop policies for the next 20 years or so.

Sharon asked how many applications will the Planning Office received for new housing developments between now and the beginning of the study? Ginger said she could not answer the question but expressed her thankfulness for the county managers office allocating funds for the studies at the end of the fiscal year so as to begin as soon as possible.

Cathy asked Caroline if she knew how many developments are in the pipeline for approval? Caroline responded that the Planning Board will not have a meeting in March due to the lack of applications for their examination.

#### 6. Guest Speaker update

Cathy asked if anybody had thoughts on future guest speakers. Amy asked why were we considering guest speakers? Cathy responded that guest speakers help educate the board members and therefore able to make better informed decisions. Amy then asked what topics are we interested in? Sharon responded we have had speakers share subjects such as developments and ground water. Sharon shared she is interested in learning more about

successful agricultural inclusive developments nation-wide and that the example of Carol County (MD?) is not a good one in that the county is now mostly split up into small horse farms.

Caroline said the Planning Board took the ag provisions out of the county development ordinance because developers have been abusing it to get around the limit on the number of allowed houses. One recent example is that a developer set aside some land in timber to satisfy the ag provision in an area zoned for ag so as to increase the number of houses allowed. Caroline shared that is common for developers to find loopholes and work arounds, and she wants to incorporate ag provisions into the development ordinances in a way that cannot be abused. Sharon said it will need to have teeth and not romance. Caroline posited that 1500 houses do not belong in developments zoned agricultural and she wants to hear our ideas regarding limits on such developments.

Amy shared how she has clients who have built agricultural zoned developments with fruit trees and garden beds near large estate homes in Wake County. She said she thinks developments surrounded by working farmland may inspire better landscapes but still expects compromise. She knows of 1 development in Raleigh that installed a vineyard but is quite upscale and is out of reach for most homebuyers. She will reach out to that client to gain some insight into ag zoned developments.

Cathy asked Caroline how we can help with recommendations or resolutions? Caroline responded that she would appreciate seeing past resolutions submitted to the Board of Commissioners. Caroline also shared how she joined the UDO sub-committee so as to bring our concerns to the table in a timely manner. She asked if we could research for ideas and success stories and forward them to her as we discover them. Ginger said that all resolutions should be archived on the county website and that she would look into locating them and share the links.

Cathy asked again if we would think about guest speakers.

## 7. New Business

Ben asked if anybody had attended the county listening session regarding the American Rescue Plan funds it will receive. Cathy asked Ginger if she could explain what Ben was asking

about. Ginger shared the county will receive \$14.2M to put towards Covid mitigation efforts and infrastructure. The county is conducting listening sessions to gain input and the next Ag focused meeting will be on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at the Silk Hope Ruritan. Ginger also shared that county department heads are tasked with putting for project ideas for this money and she expects the county to address water infrastructure, programming access & equability and digital literacy. She will send along information regarding the ARP funds and listening sessions.

Cathy asked if anybody did not see a notice of the listening sessions, to which nobody responded.

#### 8. Next Meeting

Cathy asked Brandy if there were any new VAD applications, to which Brandy responded there are hardly any due to a lack of recent publicity. Brandy said she will prepare to send out more mailings asking for applications as she can purchase materials and postage and has time. Cathy asked if VAD application can be announced in an Extension Service newsletter? Ginger said she will run it the March newsletter and on social media. Brandy will ask Claudia at FSA to run it in their newsletter as well.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 12th, 2022. Ben motioned to approve; Amy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.