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Agricultural Advisory Board

DRAFT Minutes

Agricultural Advisory Board

October 11th, 2022 | 7:00 PM Zoom Remote Video and CCACC Conference Room

1. Chair Tenita Solanto called meeting to order at 7:03pm.
2. Roll Call- Present members identified themselves:
 - a. Present: Tenita Solanto (Chair), Cathy Jones (Vice Chair), Sharon Day, Jeff Vaughan, Amy Fulford, Ginger Cunningham (Cooperative Extension), Susannah Goldston (Chatham SWCD), Robert Logan (Chatham County Commissioner Liaison), Caroline Sieverson, Halford House
 - b. Absent: Chris Hart (called in later?)
3. Appoint new Secretary
 - a. Cathy Jones nominated Amy Fulford. Tenita seconded. Motion approved
4. Approval of August Meeting Minutes
 - a. No amendments were noted. Tenita made a motion to approve. Sharon seconded. Minutes approved
5. Farmland Preservation Updates (Ginger Cunningham & Susannah Goldston)
 - a. Ginger gave a power point presentation entitled Chatham County Farmland/ Working Lands Preservation Program which will be presented to Commissioners October 17th. Advisory committee members advised to attend in support. Highlights include over 420 million in cash receipts. Supporting Ag in Chatham County includes old Preservation Plan. Aim is to try to conserve and preserve a finite resource in Chatham County. North Carolina rates 2nd in potential land loss by 2040. Chatham County specifically could lose almost 15,000 additional agriculture acres. These numbers are based on data from 2017 and does not reflect new developments like VinFast and WolfSpeed. This is a dire situation. Cathy noted that this is astonishing for Chatham County. Goal is to save what we can, preserve what we can, stop the bleeding right now, and then move into efforts to enhance and grow what Agriculture lands we do have left. Buncombe County is a good example in taking advantage of the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, having been awarded \$1.118 million. Ginger believes that having the county significantly back Agriculture Preservation will make a stronger case for receiving a high amount of funds from the NCADFP Trust Fund. What Ginger will ask for is a seed fund from Article 46 funds of over \$720,000, establishing the Chatham Agricultural Preservation & Development Trust Fund. If this can be established, funds can be spent this fiscal year. Goals of working

through the FPP update. This will help to develop those goals and programs for the future that this trust fund will also help to fund and supplement. End of presentation.

- b. Ginger- we need funds to be able to move forward. With the Trust Fund we'll be able to "stop the bleed" and then move into efforts where we are able to support producers. Tenita- question- What do "enhancements" mean and where will those funds go toward helping farms. Ginger- That is Step #2 and will include education and outreach as well as grant programs. Similar to Ag Venture programs. Susannah- Everything will be in response to our new FPP. Tenita- who sets criteria for who gets those funds? Susannah- we'll have to determine that through a committee and will have to go to eligible entities and for eligible farms. This step will be down the road and will be an official decision with prioritization. Article 46 Funds (currently \$722,000) are from the extra .25% tax rate increase and this year it is expected to grow by about \$500,000 with increases in subsequent years. The plan is also to ask for additional funds from more grants and working with non-profits, adding the ability to continually grow this Trust Fund and thus the amount of money going directly towards Chatham County Agriculture.
- c. Hal House- American Recovery Act having funds for farmers that leave their land in no-till or pasture for Carbon Sequestration. Susannah- there are federal funds for farms that are rewarding farmers for good practices and also changing from traditional to no-till systems. Ginger- we currently focus on carbon sequestration with young stands of timber, as they are better than Carbon Sinks like older timber stands.

6. VAD Updates (Susannah Goldston)

- a. Only one application this month, a SW poultry farmer.
- b. Cathy motioned to approve and Amy seconded. Motion approved
- c. Hal House asked are there tax advantages to enter this program. Susannah- program is completely voluntary. They are agreeing to not develop or subdivide within 10 years. Would also hold public hearings if land was condemned by a public utility or other.

7. Board Membership

- a. Not many members have reviewed applicants. Tenita will make an online poll. Susannah- always have a need for members in the SE quadrant. Rules say we need 9 members, and we have 3 vacancies. Hal House is an applicant and wanted to expand on his application. He is currently engaged in a proposal to produce alternative nutrient sources to fertilizers and biosolids due to dangerous runoff potential and various issues with PFAS and other man-made toxins in our waste streams. He is an advocate of preserving rural character. Amy- there needs to be better education for farmers about the products they are applying onto their lands and what they actually contain, whether it is biosolids or something off the shelf, and homeowners as well. Sometimes it is hard to express the realities of problems in agriculture, so the problems keep growing. Hal's process will take out the PFAS and separate out the nitrogen from biosolids. He is looking to ask for grant money to be able to do this for a town or municipalities biosolids and wastewater streams.

8. New Business (no new business)

9. Next Meeting (December 13th at 7pm)

10. Adjournment

- a. Tenita-motion to adjourn. Amy seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm