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## *Agricultural Advisory Board*

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### **DRAFT Minutes**

### **Agricultural Advisory Board**

**October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 | 7:00 PM Fidelis Fields Farm, 424 Jim Moody Rd., Siler City NC 27344**

1. Secretary Amy Fulford called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.
2. **Roll Call**
  - a. Present: Jeff Vaughan, Amy Fulford, Dave Eskelund, Diana May, Dr. John Dykers Jr.
  - b. Absent: Sharon Day
  - c. Others Present: Ginger Cunningham (Cooperative Extension), Andrew Waters (SWCD), Brandy Oldham (SWCD)
  - d. *Note: Members Tenita Solanto and Chris Hart resigned prior to the meeting.*
3. **Quorum, Procedure, and Introductions**
  - a. The board agreed by consensus that Secretary Amy Fulford would chair the meeting since previous chair Tenita Solato has resigned.
  - b. The board now has six members. Five members were present, constituting a quorum.
  - c. Ginger Cunningham introduced Andrew Waters, Chatham County's Farmland Preservation Coordinator; Andrew informed the group he would be coordinating the Advisory Board meeting and activities going forward as part of his job responsibilities.
4. **Farmland Preservation Updates**
  - a. Andrew reported grants for the pilot program of the Chatham Agricultural Preservation & Development (CAPD) Trust Fund are now open. Qualified nonprofit conservation groups are eligible to apply for the grants. The CAPD is making \$600,000 available for farmland preservation conservation easement acquisitions and \$75,000 for organizational support grants. Grant applications close on December 4. The Farmland Preservation grants are intended to provide local matching contributions to state farmland preservation grants through the North Carolina Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development & Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund. Andrew reviewed the program requirements and guidelines with the board.
  - b. Andrew reported on the status of the Farmland Preservation Plan. We are expecting to receive a draft of the plan from the plan consultants at Mt. Olive University by the end of the month. If we receive the draft as

anticipated, we would like to receive feedback from the board at a special meeting during the month of November. Andrew will be in touch with an update about the next steps at the end of the month.

- c. Andrew announced that he is working on two grants for the North Carolina ADFP. One will provide about \$8,000 for marketing and outreach purposes. The other will be for a new Agricultural Growth Zone program, which will permit Chatham County to award farmland preservation grants with ADFP funding on a rolling basis, instead of waiting for the annual grant cycle.

## 5. VAD Updates

- a. Andrew presented 5 applications for the Voluntary Agriculture District. Four applications are eligible for approval. The 5<sup>th</sup> is ineligible because it is located within Pittsboro ETJ. Andrew reported that we will be able to approve the 5<sup>th</sup> application when we update the VAD ordinance in 2024 to permit properties within the Pittsboro ETJ.
- b. After discussion, John Dykers made a motion to accept the eligible parcels. Jeff Vaughan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## 6. FY 2024 Meeting Schedule

- a. Andrew reported that the board needed to establish the calendar for the remainder of the fiscal year so the Chatham County clerk can make the meeting schedule public.
- b. John Dykers made a motion to schedule the regular quarterly meetings on the second Tuesday in March, June, September, December. The meetings will occur at Fidelis Fields Farm unless otherwise noted. Dave Eskelund seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## 7. New Business

- a. Ginger Cunningham reported that Kristina Britt has left the County Extension office. They are still searching for an Extension agent for livestock, equine, field crops, and forage works to replace her. This position will also serve as the county pesticide coordinator. She asked the board to send her recommendations or references to help fill this position. The candidate must have a bachelor's degree. A master's degree is preferred.
- b. John Dykers discussed the need for the County Commissioner representative to attend the meeting. The board noted County Commissioner representative Katie Kenlan did attend the last meeting. Andrew volunteered to reach out to Katie directly to invite her to the upcoming meetings but encouraged board members to contact her also.
- c. New Board Members: We currently have 3 vacancies on the board. Brandy reported that we currently have one eligible applicant. However, with the resignation of Tenita Solanto and Christ Hart, Brandy has asked the County Clerk to repost the application notice on the county web site. Ginger encouraged current members to solicit and recruit members for the board. Representatives from the forestry, poultry, and organic farming communities are needed, but all county residents in agriculture or agribusiness are encouraged to apply. Brandy reported that applications are rolling, so a candidate can apply whenever they wish.
- d. Amy Fulford informed the group about a recently proposed North Carolina Senate bill to remove a 10% cap on Satellite Annexations for Goldston and several other North Carolina towns (<https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/Senate/PDF/S773v0.pdf>). She and several of her neighbors are concerned that removing this limit will result in the development of farmland in the Goldston community. This led to a general discussion about the need for the board to educate economic development officials, elected representatives, and community leaders about the economic importance of agricultural development and preservation in Chatham County. Ginger Cunningham noted that we anticipate this will also be a major theme in the updated Farmland Preservation Plan.

**8. Next Meeting**

- a. Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 14, pending delivery and review of the updated Farmland Preservation Plan. Andrew will be in touch regarding the status of this meeting after the end of the month.

**9. Adjournment**

- a. John Dykers submitted a motion to adjourn. Diana May seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.