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## Agricultural Advisory Board

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### Minutes

February 13, 2023 | 7:00 PM | Fidelis Fields Farm, 424 Jim Moody Rd., Siler City, NC 27344

1. **Call to Order, 7:09 p.m.**
2. **Roll Call**
  - a. Present: Dr. John Dykers, Dave Eskelund, Diana May, Jeff Vaughan
  - b. Absent: Sharon Day, Amy Fulford
  - c. Others Present: Ginger Cunningham (Cooperative Extension), Andrew Waters (SWCD), Turn Zsambesky (UNC student)
3. **Approval of Minutes**
  - a. Minutes from the 11.14.23 meeting was distributed prior to the meeting. Dave Eskelund made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Motion seconded by Jeff Vaughn and passed unanimously.
4. **Farmland Preservation Plan Presentation**
  - a. Andrew reported that we have officially closed our contract with the Mt. Olive University consulting group. Staff will be preparing an executive summary of the planning document that can be distributed publicly and to local officials. Several members noted that it is important to have a synthesized version of the plan for public review.
  - b. Moving forward we will be prioritizing recommendations from the plan that can be turned into action items. Although the plan contains several good recommendations, not all the recommendations are feasible given county and local partner resources.
  - c. Diana observed that the background information in the plan will be useful for grants, public reports, and other publicity and reporting purposes. Referencing the approach of the Buncombe County plan, Dave said he would like to see more personalization in the plan document, including profiles of local Chatham County farmers. He also recommends development of a data dashboard that can be updated periodically for presentation to the County Commissioners, the public, and other local officials.
5. **Officer Election**
  - a. Andrew noted that the chair and vice chair positions are currently open. At the last meeting we agreed to hold elections at this meeting. In a previous email correspondence, Dave Eskelund and John Dykers volunteered to serve in officer capacities.
  - b. Jeff Vaughn nominated Dave Eskelund to serve as Board chair. Dave agreed to serve if elected. Diana May seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
  - c. John Dykers agreed to serve as vice chair. Diana May nominated John to serve as vice chair and Dave Eskelund seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **6. CAPD Application Review**

- a. Andrew presented information on the following three applications for the inaugural round of grants for the Chatham Agricultural Preservation and Development Trust Fund:
  - i. Chathamance Farm (Johnson): 87 acres; \$12,000 CAPD request
  - ii. Dry Creek Farm (Buckner): 80 acres; \$150,000 CAPD request
  - iii. Grantie Springs Farm (Leight): 120 acres; \$438,000 CAPD request
- b. Andrew noted that all three projects qualify for funding. Staff is recommending approval of the projects. AAB Board members are being asked to recommend the projects for CAPD funding to the Chatham Board of Commissioners.
- c. Discussion centered on the details of the project and their proposed timeline. Andrew reported on the funding match anticipated for each project. He said he anticipates the projects to be completed sometime in late 2024 or 2025, depending on how soon grant contracts and due diligence documents can be completed. General discussion then revolved around how the first-round projects could be used to promote our Farmland Preservation Program. We will develop some social and traditional media material to highlight the projects once completed. We are also planning a tour of the protected farms for local officials
- d. Dave made a motion to recommend the projects for funding to the Board of Commissioners. Jeff Vaughn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously/

## **7. Voluntary Agricultural District applications**

- a. Andrew presented the slate of applications for the Voluntary Agricultural District. We had 9 applications for the VAD program encompassing 19 tax parcels and 1098.22 acres. Dave said he had Richard & Laura Cheston, who applied for over 400 acres. Andrew said all the applications had been reviewed and qualified for the program.
- b. Jeff Vaughn motioned to approve the VAD applications. Dave seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Dave volunteered to deliver the Cheston's sign.

## **8. New Business**

- a. Dave Eskelund said he is interested in conducting interviews with local farmers and members of the agricultural community. The interviews will be incorporated in future versions of the Farmland Preservation Plan and other program documents. He got the idea from similarly formatted interviews in the Buncombe County Farmland Preservation Plan and feels like the interview helped personalize their farmland preservation efforts. Dave will share the questions with other AAB members, who are invited to join Dave for the interviews. By consensus, the members endorsed Dave's proposal and pledged their support.

## **9. Next Meeting**

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of April 9, 2024. The location will be Dave Eskelund's barn. Dave is treating the group to a barbecue supper.

## **10. Adjournment**

- a. Dave submitted a motion to adjourn. Jeff seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.