

**ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: October 20, 2009

Action Agenda

Item No. 4-K

SUBJECT: Grant Submittal to the Rural Advancement Fund International USA Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund for the PLANT @ Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator at the WC Breeze Family Farm Extension & Research Center

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development
Cooperative Extension

PUBLIC HEARING: (Y/N)

No

ATTACHMENT(S):

INFORMATION CONTACT:

Noah Ranells	245-2330
Brad Broadwell	245-2325
Joey Knight	245-2050

PURPOSE: To authorize staff to submit a \$30,000 grant proposal to the Rural Advancement Fund International USA Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund for the PLANT @ Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator at the WC Breeze Family Farm Extension & Research Center.

BACKGROUND: The development of new farm enterprises and diversification of existing farm operations can be challenging and pose considerable financial risk. However, there are many opportunities for production and marketing of farm products produced by local farmers. With modest yet critical annual County funding of \$10,000, the PLANT @ Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator was initiated in 2007 and continues to serve residents of Orange County and its neighboring counties.

Through a strong effective interdepartmental collaboration, Cooperative Extension and Economic Development developed and implemented a series of eight Wednesday evening workshops held every January and February. With strong support from the local community, attendance included 45 to 50 aspiring farmers for each of the workshops of the 8-week training series held this past January and February. Local farmers were involved in presentation and discussion at each workshop along with a local, regional, or state farm related specialist. Following the workshop series, participants who wanted to farm land at the Breeze Farm were required to complete a business plan. If approved, these individuals were able to contract for prepared planting beds and grow their own crops. A total of eleven farm enterprises participated in 2009, and others have initiated or expanded their farm operations on land they currently own.

Given the success this past year, Cooperative Extension and Economic Development have identified the need for additional funds to support this project and expand the program activities. Therefore, staff requests authorization to submit a grant proposal to the Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund for \$30,000. The application deadline is November 11, 2009. Funds from this grant will be used to provide for expansion plans that may include a mentor farmer, new

irrigation system, and specialized equipment. Additionally, new initiatives in permaculture, as well as fruit and berry production, may be facilitated with these funds.

The PLANT @ Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator is a successful part of the concept plan for the WC Breeze Family Farm Extension and Research Center. It was instituted at a fall 2006 joint meeting of Orange County representatives and administrators from the North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Implementing the concept plan for the WC Breeze Family Farm Extension & Research Center is guided by the Breeze Planning Committee composed of Orange County Cooperative Extension and Economic Development staff as well as three representatives from NC State University. There was agreement by the Committee to submit this grant proposal to further develop the Incubator Component of the Breeze Concept Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: There is no financial impact associated with submitting this grant proposal. There is no local match required. However, the existing County funding coupled with the commitment of County staff does enhance the County's position for this competitive grant opportunity. Staff resources in Cooperative Extension and Economic Development will continue to be dedicated to guiding activities at the Breeze Farm.

RECOMMENDATION(S): The Manager recommends the BOCC authorize staff to submit a \$30,000 grant proposal to the Rural Advancement Fund International USA, Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund, for the PLANT @ Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator at the WC Breeze Family Farm Extension & Research Center.