

**ORANGE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD**

**MEETING SUMMARY - APPROVED
May 21st, 2014**

Environment & Agricultural Center – Conference Room
306 Revere Road, Hillsborough, NC
7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Howard McAdams (Chair), Renee McPherson, Ashley Parker, Noah Ranells

MEMBERS ABSENT/EXCUSED: Allan Green, Kim Woods, Joe Thompson

GUESTS: Steve Brantley, Director, Orange County Economic Development Office

STAFF: Gail Hughes, Soil Conservationist, DEAPR - Orange Soil & Water Conservation District; Peter Sandbeck, Cultural Resources Coordinator, DEAPR

1. **Call to Order:** Chair McAdams called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.
2. **Vice-Chair Comments:** None
3. **Consideration of Additions to Agenda:** Correction of date of next meeting was noted: it will be August 20th. Steve Brantley was asked to make his presentation next, which moved him ahead on the agenda.
4. **Meeting Summary / Minutes – March 19th, 2014 (Attachment 1):** Parker moved to accept the minutes/summary; seconded by Ranells; motion carried.
5. **Report by Steve Brantley about Ag-related Economic Development Programs**
The chair introduced Mr. Brantley, who presented an overview of the Ag-related activities of the Orange County Economic Development Office. They have a strong ag focus compared with our neighboring counties that seek out traditional industries. They have a long record of supporting various ag-related activities, including the PFAP project. He is now working to fill their new Ag Economic Development position, formed by combining two half-time positions. He reviewed the proposed duties of that position. He would welcome input from the Ag Board on ideas for this position. Storage, both conventional and refrigerated, is a big issue for our ag-related businesses and for PFAP.

He reviewed the current status of the Econ. Dev. funds now available through the ¼ cent sales tax. They expect to bring in a total of \$1.25 million. 60% or about 700k will go to debt service on the new water/sewer projects; up to \$200 k to the small business loan

program; \$100k to the business investment grants; the remainder could be used for other categories. Nothing has been spent for the Ag or business investment grant yet, due to that lack of guidelines. They now need to develop a process for reviewing and awarding grants and loans, and for defining how that money should be spent. He would welcome this board's input on how these funds should be used and appropriate criteria.

Discussion followed with questions from Ag Board members including: PFAP storage issues, the timeframe for hiring the new position, and how the new loans and grants might work for ag-related projects. There was additional discussion about how the Ag Board could be involved in the interviews and help develop the grant/loan processes. Perhaps the Chair or Vice Chair could sit in on the interviews as an observer and thus could offer feedback before hiring decisions are made. Mr. Brantley said he would have to check with HR and Carl Matyac about having a board member as an observer.

Members thanked Mr. Brantley for his very informative presentation.

(For more detail, please refer to the attached summary of Mr. Brantley's presentation and the board's discussion of those topics.)

5. Items for Decision:

(a): New VAD and EVAD applications: (Attachment 2): Hughes introduced four pending applications for Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD).

These applications, along with those still pending from the previous meetings, will go before the BOCC on June 3rd. These applications have been reviewed by staff and meet all the criteria and requirements for APB consideration for the VAD or EVAD programs. Hughes opened the floor for discussion and approval.

John and Cindy Soehner: 22.3 acres for VAD: (White Cross District: Butler Road) Two parcels in present use. Motion to approve made by Ranells, seconded by McPherson; motion carried.

Randall Parker: 94.17 acres for VAD: (Caldwell District—Tilley Road) He is joint owner of several tracts, but is signing all five applications. All parcels are in present use. Motion to approve made by Parker, seconded by Ranells; motion carried.

Jane Durham Williams and Caroline Wilson/Edwards Place LLC: 137 acres for VAD: (White Cross District). Motion to approve made by McPherson, seconded by Ranells; motion carried.

Revision/Modification of Existing Farm:

Norman Walker: 15.55 acres for VAD (Caldwell District). This is an update to include a tract that was embedded in other tracts and a woodland tract that was omitted earlier. Motion to approve made by Ranells, seconded by Parker; motion carried.

Hughes referred members to her updated handout showing a total of 6,984 acres by the end of June. Last year she worked with 46 parcels, compared to 42 parcels this year;

these had slightly less acreage. She requested \$2,700 for signs in this year's budget. Members would like to do a nice press release when we reach 7,000 acres.

6. Items for Discussion

- a. See Brantley report, above.
- b. Next steps for enlisting new board members: Vaughn Compton is interested in filling our vacancy in Cedar Grove. Staff will proceed to recommend his appointment. McAdams spoke with Gordon Neville, who said he was willing to join. Members agreed to ask Roland Walters if he would serve for High Rock in place of his mother. Staff clarified that our ordinance does not call for life appointments for the district members; the same term limits apply for all members. New VAD participants will be eligible: Dwight Poole, Cecelia Redding, David and Vickie McKee, Ben Johnson, John Soehner, Carolyn Wilson, Randall Parker and Norman Walker.
- c. Present Use Issues: At the March meeting, the board discussed exploring the idea of removing our own present use requirement now that the state no longer requires it. Staff noted that we can delete that requirement thanks to the state legislation change. We can still retain our key requirements: must be a viable farm, have important soils, and have a conservation or forestry management plan. Gail does this sort of verification for every applicant now. Removing the present-use requirement would allow new farmers or existing farmers who are adding lands to their holdings to enroll. We should still require a staff assessment and ensure that the farm qualifies with the Farm Service Agency/has a farm number. Staff will provide a strikethrough version to show proposed changes for discussion in August. We will then send our proposed revisions to the Dept. of Agriculture (Dewitt Hardee) for their review and edits or approval.

7. Informational Items / Future Agenda Items

- a. Ag Support Enterprises Update: was approved by the BOCC for the areas outside the rural buffers; will approve rural buffer rules separately.
- b. Animal Services Ordinance Revision Update: They are still doing their own internal work on the ordinance; no revision has been released yet.
- c. Orange County Community Giving Fund: staff handed out folders containing information about this new foundation created to allow specified donations to the County; this will be managed by the Triangle Community Foundation.

8. **Adjournment:** There was follow-up discussion about having a member observe the interviews for the new Econ Dev job. Perhaps a note from the chair or vice chair to Steve and Carl. Noah will explore the new Econ Dev. grant/loan process and report back in August. Chair McAdams adjourned the meeting at 9:03 pm.

Next Meeting – October 15th, 2014