

**ORANGE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD**

**MEETING SUMMARY--APPROVED
August 20th, 2014**

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Howard McAdams (Chair), Allan Green, Renee McPherson, Ashley Parker, Noah Ranells, Kim Woods

MEMBERS ABSENT/EXCUSED: Joe Thompson, Vaughn Compton

GUESTS: Brianna Bake

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 7:30 PM.
2. **Vice-Chair Comments:** None
3. **Consideration of Additions to Agenda:** Ranells asked if he could add a brief follow-up discussion regarding the ¼ cent sales tax. Stancil reminded members that the new County Manager plans to attend tonight, following her attendance at the Animal Services board.
4. **Meeting Summary / Minutes – May 21st, 2014 (Attachment 1):** Stancil reported that Economic Development was hiring for the new Ag Development Specialist position. Woods added that she had been invited to sit in on the interview process and thought that they had agreed on a candidate, but heard recently that they had re-advertised. Ranells moved to accept the minutes/summary; seconded by McPherson; motion carried.

5. Items for Decision:

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

These applications have been reviewed by staff and meet all the criteria and requirements for APB consideration for the VAD or EVAD programs. Hughes reviewed each application then opened the floor for discussion and approval.

Cedar Grove Windy Hill Farm, Geoffrey and Jane Gledhill: 38.8 acres for EVAD: (Cedar Grove District: Carr Store Road) Parcel is currently in present use. Motion to approve made by Woods, seconded by Ranells; motion carried.

McAdams Farm, Howard and Karen McAdams: 13.42 acres for VAD: (Efland-High Rock District—Efland-Cedar Grove Road) Two parcels, both in present use. Chair McAdams recused himself from this proceeding. Vice-chair Woods asked for a motion to approve the McAdams Farm VAD application. Motion to approve made by Parker, seconded by McPherson; motion carried.

Ranells asked for a brief overview of the benefits of the EVAD. Hughes reported that this is a 10 year irrevocable conservation agreement. Benefits include: higher cost share from some state and federal programs; you get priority points for grant application reviews; the farm may receive up to 25% of gross sales from the sale of non-farm products and still maintain its zoning exemption as a bona fide farm. With the EVAD, the agreement automatically renews for periods of three years.

6. Items for Discussion

- a. Suggested language to revise Orange County VFPP ordinance to remove “present use” requirement for VAD/EVAD: Staff handed out draft ordinance language edited to remove the present use requirement. This wording uses the language as revised by the state legislature in 2011. Staff also provided a copy of the 2011 state law as amended to eliminate the present use mandate for VAD/EVAD, along with the state’s official list of definitions of agriculture as spelled out in GS 106-581.1. Discussion followed. How small should a farm be to qualify for VAD/EVAD? Should we screen them based on income or acreage? Hughes noted that her office already screens applicants to make sure farms have a conservation plan or a forestry plan. Their smallest conservation plan is about 1.5 acres. Moore County removed the present use requirement but left all others in place. Members agreed that smaller farms, say as little as 2 or 3 acres, can be viable. Ranells thinks the acreage threshold is simple, but we could require a conservation plan or use the income approach. Or, we leave in the present use language but add a clause for special exceptions. Woods agreed but suggested adding language to address specific cases where a farm is less than 5 acres.

Ranells asked members to look at item 3, as it now stands in our draft revised ordinance handout and suggests we consider omitting items **b**, **c**, **d** and **e**, and but keep the part below **e** that starts with: *“Have been actively used....”* Either it has a plan or it has to be actively farmed, and this group is capable of determining what is or is not a bona fide farm. Ranells offered the following motion, using the draft revision just handed out as a starting point: *“Under item 3, move item a into the starting sentence, eliminate items b through e. Leave item 2 as shown in the draft revision, which eliminates present use. Farms would still be required to work with Gail’s group to develop a conservation plan. They would have to be certified as a farm, or be operating as a farm, or have 2/3 of land that meets the requirements.”* This was seconded by Woods.

Discussion followed. Stancil reported that the new County Manager is still in another meeting. He then noted that under item 3, the paragraph starting with *“Have been actively used...”* is indented too far. He reminded members that proposed changes must be taken to the BOCC, so be prepared to justify these changes. Some discussion followed to remind members that the Ag Board’s

mission is much broader than just VAD and EVAD approval. Staff will prepare a new draft for review by the board and will send same to Dewitt Hardee, then to the County Attorney. Motion carried.

- b. Next steps for enlisting new board members: Vaughn Compton has been approved and is the newest member, for Cedar Grove. Chair McAdams recognized guest Brianna Bake, who explained she was an applicant for the Ag Economic Development position and wants to learn more about the Ag Board. She thinks the new position could provide valuable support for the board. Sandbeck confirmed that Gordon Neville (White Cross District) is willing to join. Staff will assist him with the application form. Ranells will ask Roland Walters if he will apply to serve for High Rock in place of his mother. Hughes will approach owners of some of the newly-enrolled farms in the districts with vacancies.
- c. Interest in work group for user-friendly brochure for Ag Support Enterprises: Staff reported on our review of the new brochure prepared by Planning to serve as a guide for farmers who may wish to use the ASE. Ranells asked if we had a marketing person to help as that would help engage interest from farmers. He thinks an online resource with live links would be the best way. A brochure cannot fully cover the topic, but should be simple to draw them in, and inside have bullets, then tell them to contact Planning. Ranells would like to see a live link and having it online. Green described his efforts to work with the online UDO, which is a 700 page PDF document. There was general agreement that the brochure should be simpler. What is needed is a special web site. Ranells volunteered to work with Hughes and Sandbeck to brainstorm on this.

7. Informational Items / Future Agenda Items

- a. Animal Services Ordinance Revision Update: The proposed revised ordinance is now in the hands of the county attorneys but is not yet ready for release.
- b. New Item: Update on 1/4 cent sales tax: Ranells handed out a draft of ideas for ways to utilize the Ag revenue from this tax, possibly through an innovation grant fund and/or a business support grant program. He feels that some action should be taken to promote the ag-related use of this revenue. Stancil offered to share the Ag Board's concerns with the new County Manager and confirmed that it was OK to share the bare bones of this concept with her. Members agreed that it would be helpful to get her thinking about this now that the tax is on her radar. McPherson moved to ask Dave Stancil to share Noah's sheet with the new Manager, clearly marked as a DRAFT or concept. This was seconded by Parker; motion carried.
- c. New Item: New Fees for Forestry Management Plans: Hughes provided a new handout developed by the NC Forest Service, explaining the new fee structure for plans, as mandated by the legislature. Woods provided an update on the reorganization of the Extension Service.

- 8. **Adjournment:** Chair McAdams asked for a motion to adjourn. Ranells made a motion, seconded by Woods. Motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 9:04 pm.

Next Meeting – October 15th, 2014