

**ORANGE COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD**

**MEETING SUMMARY -- APPROVED  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015**

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

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vaughn Compton, Howard McAdams (Chair), Renee McPherson, Ashley Parker, Noah Ranells, Joe Thompson, Kim Woods (Vice-Chair)

**MEMBERS ABSENT/EXCUSED:** Gordon Neville

**GUESTS:** Bonnie Hammersley, County Manager  
Mike Ortosky, Agriculture Economic Development Coordinator

**STAFF:** David Stancil, Director, DEAPR; Gail Hughes, Soil Conservationist, DEAPR – Orange Soil & Water Conservation District; Peter Sandbeck, Cultural Resources Coordinator, DEAPR

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1. **Call to Order:** Chair McAdams called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.
  2. **Vice-Chair Comments:** None
  3. **Consideration of Additions to Agenda:** Stancil wished to make a few comments at the end of the meeting.
  4. **Meeting Summary / Minutes – Oct. 15th, 2014 (Attachment 1):** Parker moved to accept the minutes/summary; seconded by Thompson; motion carried.
  5. **Introduction of Guests and Comments:** Stancil introduced Bonnie Hammersley, new Orange County Manager. Members introduced themselves. Ms. Hammersley gave an overview of her background. She grew up on a dairy farm where her brother still lives after having to sell his herd. She understands the challenges that farmers face. Members discussed the county's high tax rate compared to neighboring counties. This acts as a disincentive for young farmers seeking to make physical/structural improvements to their property, or for farmers buying equipment.

Stancil introduced Mike Ortosky, the County's new Ag Economic Development Coordinator. Mr. Ortosky reviewed his background in soil science and land planning. He hopes to focus on local foods and building markets for local growers, including food hubs and other ways to get more local food on the market and in institutions, sort of 10% and beyond. He is working on an Ag Economic Development Plan for the County and will

share more of that. He wants to speak to all types of farmers to get a sense of their issues. Hughes suggested that he should talk to Ag Board members as they represent a diverse cross-section of the farm community. Ortosky noted that recent studies show that the majority of farmers do not make a living farming but have other sources of income. Right now a young person who starts out farming will not be able to count on making a decent living. Compton noted that the average farmer today is 58 years old. Ortosky stated that tobacco is bigger now than it was a hundred years ago but the number of farmers is vastly smaller. Compton remarked on the cyclical nature of the markets right now: organic tobacco is doing well. Chicken is doing OK today but was tough two years ago.

Discussion followed about the status of the proposed Ag Economic Development grant program. Members expressed their interest in being involved in developing the guidelines and application. Hammersley noted that the Economic Development Advisory Board has drafted guidelines for the BOCC's Jan 27<sup>th</sup> work session. Ranells noted that this board has great depth but members feel they have been left out of this process. There was some urgency to get the Ag Grant program moving quickly as funds are available now and need to get out into the economy. Hammersley noted that they will do their best to reach out and seek the board's input. They value the board's input and will share a draft with the members. Members agreed that the Ag Board needs strong representation in the application review process. Stancil asked members to let us know if they see any issues.

## 6. Items for Decision:

(a): New VAD and EVAD applications: (Attachment 2): Hughes introduced one new application for an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD).

This has been reviewed by staff and meets all the criteria and requirements for APB consideration for the EVAD program. Hughes reviewed the application then opened the floor for discussion and approval. Members discussed the biodynamic process.

**Robert and Cheri Bowers: 51.24 acres for EVAD:** (Cedar Grove District: Art Road north of Hurdle Mills Road) They grow organic and biodynamic vegetables, fruits, berries and honey, and sell at the Carrboro farmer's market. Ranells moved to approve the Bowers EVAD; seconded by McPherson; motion carried.

Hughes is also processing an address change/update for the McPherson VAD to add Renee's name to the application. There are now 7,145 acres in our VAD/EVAD program.

## 7. Items for Discussion

- a. Looking ahead: meeting calendar for 2015: Staff handed out a new draft calendar for 2015. Discussion followed. Members agreed to meet every other month as shown in the draft calendar rather than skip July.
- b. Election of Officers to be held at the March meeting: Staff passed out copies of the current rosters. Board policy calls for the annual election of members to be held every March. The Clerk's office is phasing out lifetime memberships for any

board, so our old policy of having district members for life will be phased out. Compton is the first new district member to have a term expiration date after his name. New district members can serve two terms of three years each.

- c. Final Draft of revisions to Orange County VFPP to remove “present use” requirement: Hughes submitted our revised draft to Dewitt Hardee at the Department of Agriculture. His staff asked us to add language to our draft revision (Section 48-7, item 4) to include the words “**and NC Soil and Water Conservation**” after “Natural Resources Conservation Service.” Hughes explained that since the NRCS is federal, and Soil and Water is state, there are some instances where the two programs have slight differences. Members agreed and asked staff to add this and send the draft to the County Attorney for adoption.
- d. Membership: McAdams noted that at the December meeting of the advisory boards the BOCC members said they will try to work from our list of prospective applicants but may go ahead to fill long-standing vacancies. We should actively seek new members. At-large members do not need to be landowners or VAD/EVAD participants. Members offered names for prospective board members. Other ideas included: managers of some of the local farmer’s markets; the PFAP manager, the farmer foodshare folks, or even restaurant owners.

## 8. Informational Items / Future Agenda Items

- a. Ag Summit on February 16th: Mike Ortosky urged members to attend the upcoming Ag Summit, to be held on Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> at the Whitted Center.
  - b. Animal Services Ordinance Revisions: Bob Marotto reported that the Animal Services Board is now working with the towns on the final stages of revising their proposed new ordinance. Mr. Marotto promised share the final version.
  - c. Final copy of the Ag Board’s Annual Work Plan and Report: The BOCC will be inviting the various board chairs to meet with them to be recognized for their work and share information. Ag Board leaders will be invited to participate.
  - d. Local governments continue to discuss issues related to AG Support Enterprises: This attachment was included for informational purposes. Both Chapel Hill and Carrboro are debating Ag Support Enterprises within the rural buffer.
9. **Time for information sharing:** Stancil noted the good activity now underway on the 10% campaign. DEAPR is planning to open Blackwood Farm as a new park this spring, initially on weekends. The county’s space study committee is bringing in a space planner to look at our space utilization. One idea is to build a new building adjacent to this one, then tear down this building. Ortosky noted that there may be new ways to look at the rural buffer. While the stated intent of the buffer is to limit sprawl/protect land, we are not achieving that goal. Other communities are working with developers to cluster higher densities of housing while permanently preserving larger open tracts of rural land.
10. **Adjournment:** Woods moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Parker; motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting – March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015