

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

AGENDA

6:30 PM, MONDAY, December 10, 2018
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a) November 15 Farmer and Rancher Listening Session
 - b) October 8 Regular meeting
3. Q: Agricultural Buffers
4. Farmer & Rancher Listening Session Responses (see attachment)
5. Aquaculture
6. Calendar for 2019
7. Ex-Officio

Anyone wishing to submit written comments to the Agricultural Advisory Board can send their comments to the Planning Department by mail or by emailing them to the email address below. Please Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the agenda via email please contact our office, or email us at achapman@oconeesc.com.

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

MINUTES

6:30 PM, MONDAY, October 8th, 2018

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

Members Present:

- Rex Blanton
- Ed Land
- Debbie Sewell
- Kim Alexander
- Dr. Sandra Gray
- Doug Hollifield
- Vickie Willoughby

Staff Present:

Adam Chapman - Staff Liaison

Media Present:

None

1. **Call to Order** - 6:30PM

2. **Approval of Minutes**

September 10th, 2018

3. **Public Comment** - None

4. **UpState Forever**

Chris Starker, a representative from UpState Forever, a land conservation group gave a presentation to the AAB on the benefits, costs, and procedures related to putting land into a conservation easement. An in-depth presentation involving the various methods and benefits was had by the board with Mr. Starker.

5. **Discussion on the Farmer & Rancher Listening Session II**

Mr. Blanton asked to confirm the date of the meeting, November 15th. Mr. Chapman asked the board for their input on how the logistics of the meeting will run. Mr. Chapman recommended having a process where break out groups occur. Mr. Chapman noted that the Listening session will tie in to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hollifield and Mrs. Sewell suggested that the focus should be on the farmers and not break up but listen to all the farmers as a whole.

6. **Protection of Agricultural Lands**

Mr. Chapman noted that the Planning Commission has asked the AAB to provide some additional information regarding agricultural buffers. Mr. Chapman has asked the AAB to provide information regarding their thoughts on the potential buffer. Mr. Hollifield asked about the distance of the Lake Overlay vegetative buffer, Mr. Chapman answered 25'. Mrs. Sewell asked

why these buffers would only apply to areas zoned agricultural versus all farms. Mrs. Sewell asked if we could find a way to look at areas next to farms that are not zoned for agriculture.
Mr. Hollifield

7. Heritage Fair & Farm-to-Table summary

Mr. Blanton outlined the AAB table and its impact at the fair.

8. Radio minute-

The radio minute was discussed throughout the meeting regarding the format. Mrs. Alexander clarified that the AAB would run one advertisement, ahead of the Farmer and Rancher Listening Session. A conversation was had regarding the choice of advertisements. Mr. Blanton recommended utilizing the narrative format of the advertisement and the board agreed.

9. Rural infrastructure-

Mr. Land provided a brief overview of the sewer south project.

10. Ex-officio member

The board was informed about the new position on the AAB, the Ex-Officio member. No vote was taken

11. New Business

12. Old Business

13. Adjourn

Anyone wishing to submit written comments to the Agricultural Advisory Board can send their comments to the Planning Department by mail or by emailing them to the email address below. Please Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the agenda via email please contact our office, or email us at achapman@oconeesc.com.



OCONEE COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Farmer & Rancher Listening Session II
Thursday, November 15th, 2018

Members Present:

Rex Blanton, Chairman
Ed Land, Vice Chair
Debbie Sewell
Kim Alexander
Dr. Sandra Gray
Vickie Willoughby
Doug Hollifield

Staff Present:

Adam Chapman, Staff Liaison

Media Present:

Upstate Today

Ag & Art:

Les Walden , representing Lake Hartwell Country, and, Charlotte Waters, representing Visit Oconee. They spoke on “Ag & Art” whereby artist are paired with farms to create a temporary attraction. The Ag & Art event held in 2018 in Oconee County went better then they hope for. Mrs. Waters hopes to expand this event for 2019 and having up to 10 farms.

Farmer & Rancher Listening Session:

Mr. Blanton brought the meeting to order at 6:30. Mr. Blanton welcomed the audience to the session. Mr. Blanton then gave several reasons as to why this listening session is happening, such as engaging the agricultural community, having farmer input in to the comprehensive plan and making sure agriculture stays on the forefront of everyone’s mind when making county wide decisions. Mr. Blanton went on to explain what the comprehensive plan is, what has been done since the last listening session, and how this night’s meeting will work. Mr. Blanton then began the session by calling Mr. Dan Nerding to speak.

Mr. Nerding spoke as a farmer who specializes in aquaculture/aquaponics and the need for the government to recognize that farms can occur in small areas, land wise. His

issues stem from the lack of buyers for small scale fisheries providers. An outlet for his product is what he is missing.

Mrs. May Leinhart, spoke on behalf of Upstate Forever. Mrs. Leinhart spoke about the process and the benefits of the creation of agricultural conservation easements. Mrs. Leinhart noted that land can be preserved as farmland in-perpetuity with a conservation easement.

Mrs. Gwen McPhail, spoke on behalf of herself. Mrs. McPhail noted that land is in demand and that linking land holders with future and young farmers is a key element. Mrs. McPhail thanked the AAB for its work on getting agriculture in the comprehensive plan. Mrs. McPhail noted that Young Farmers started the current Heritage Fair in the county.

Dr. Lance Beecher, spoke on behalf of himself. Dr. Beecher noted that he works with several farmers in Oconee County for aquaculture. The vegetable part of aquaponics is the easy part, the fish part is difficult. Reaching the economy of scale necessary regarding fish for processing, is difficult. Dr. Beecher noted a system for veterans to get involved in agriculture including aquaponics.

Lee Keese, spoke on behalf of the Farm Bureau. Mr. Keese noted that the Farm Bureau provides outreach and advocacy for farmers in the area. The Farm Bureau also is involved in conservation easements. Mr. Keese is also a member of Cattleman's association.

Karrin Patterson, spoke on behalf of FFA West-Oak. All FFA chapters affiliated with Young Farmers association. One goal is to get the young farmers up and coming association. Ms. Patterson invited any farmer to come and join as well.

Ken Martin, spoke on behalf of Field-dale Farms. Mr. Martin noted he has been involved in many different jurisdictions in their writing of agriculture laws. He noted Franklin County, Georgia has almost 1000 chicken houses. The chicken house ordinances, in Franklin County, apply the setbacks on both the chicken house as well as the adjacent landowners.

The remainder of the meeting was an interactive conversation and workshop to gain insight from the attendees.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned 8:03

Questions

Farmer and Rancher
Q and A

Question 1: What are you most proud of in Oconee County? What do you love the most about the County?	Natural beauty	Proud that we're using the County and land to benefit agriculture and the role it plays in our economy locally and state-wide.							
Question 2: What are you most concerned about in Oconee County?	Development and jobs for Youth	Preserving our land	Farmland availability, affordability and proper use	Availability and reduced knowledge about agriculture and the importance of farmland					
Question 3: What new land uses are most needed in Oconee County?	Impact fees	Moving Rail tracks to southern portion of County	New Sports/recreation	Land research could improve/inspire young farmer involvement; university educational programs to introduce agriculture to younger generations.					
Question 4: What are your top three hopes or wishes for the future of Oconee County?	Clean: air, water, soil	Development limited to appropriate areas and farmland is protected	1: Joint county water and sewer 2: Contact State agencies to incorporate their plans (SCDOT, Agriculture, Econ. Development	1) Various tourism resources (new and expand) 2) Coops started by farmers/organic	1) Bring more areas to educate younger people about agriculture; 2) More things that support ag. and the role it plays in our lives 3) less development				
Question 5: What questions do we need to be asking about the future of development in Oconee County?	1) Will this development benefit the community? 2) How long will this development be successful?	How long with Duke Energy be around?							
What are some solutions for the problems facing farmers in Oconee County?	1) Zoning and setback limits; 2) caps on rate increases for commercial production	Reciprocal setbacks	1) Setbacks for development; 2) Land connections and young	Small farmer entry	Education				
What are the largest issues for farmers in Oconee County?	Encroachment	Development	Markets	Development and Res.	DHEC; encroachment; taxes; utilities	development	Profitability	Regulation	

Questions

Farmer and Rancher
Q and A

When you retire from farming, will anyone from your family take your place on the farm?	Not likely	No	Hope so	Yes, 5th generation	Hopefully	Yes			
In ten years, what does farming in Oconee County look like?	Small sustainable	Lost?	Farming will make a comeback; people will buy local if available	Decrease in farming because not enough land	Smaller than now unless there are changes	Less available farm land	Decrease; will eventually run out of land.	Decrease due to less land and reduced interest. Hope people become more educated in the role agriculture plays in everyday life.	
Has new development near your farm impacted the way you farm?	Not yet	Yes	Yes	Yes; subdividing behind farm	yes	Yes, losing land to farm			
How long have you been farming?	1 year here	50 years	32 years	Family farmed since late 19th century	Born into farming	16 years	5th generation; full time 7 years		
What do you farm?	Cattle, sheep, poultry, row crops, horses	hogs, aquaponics, chickens	beef cattle and timber	poultry/beef	Chicken, cows	mushrooms	poultry, cattle, hay, row crops	broilers, cattle, soybeans, wheat, rye and hay	cattle