



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



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MINUTES

6:30 PM, Monday, June 11th, 2018

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

Members Present:

Ms. Sewell District 1
Mr. Hollifield District 2
Dr.Gray District 3
Ms. Willoughby District 5
Ms. Alexander At-Large
Mr. Blanton At-Large
Danny Howard Ex-Officio

Staff Present: Adam Chapman, Zoning Administrator

Media Present: None

1. Call to Order

Mr. Blanton called the meeting to order at 6:30

2. Approval of Minutes

May 14th minutes: Dr.Gray noted that her name was excluded from members in attendance at the previous meeting although she was present. Motion for approval by Mrs. Willoughby, seconded by Ms. Alexander. Unanimous vote for approval.

3. Possibility of future grant funding - Guest Speaker

Sharon DeRitter, the County Grants Administrator, gave a presentation that showcased the various resources for finding grants. She implored those in attendance to work together to help bring grants into the County for Agriculture.

4. Farmer & Rancher Listening Session

Mr. Blanton introduced the AAB to the audience then the individual board members briefly introduced themselves. Mr. Blanton then began the listening session by inviting Richard Belmore to speak.

Richard Belmore, representing the Oconee County Bee Keeper's Association, spoke of the importance of protecting pollinators from poor application of pesticides aimed at

destroying mosquitos. Mr. Belmore noted an incident elsewhere in the State where millions of bees were reported killed due to aerial overspray. Mr. Belmore called on the County to implement protocols related to aerial spraying for mosquitos within the County. Dr. Tim Drake, of Clemson Extension Service and the State Entomologist asked the chair for permission to speak about the noted bee-kill off and Mr. Blanton agreed to it. Dr. Drake noted the facts of the case and that the State had concluded that the aerial spraying may have contributed to some bee-deaths but ultimately it was not responsible for the mass die-off.

Cristiana Calderan Bell, of Corra Bella Farms, introduced herself as the largest breeder of Kune Kune pigs in the State. She also raises other animals. She spoke that there was too much completion between the Farmer's markets in the County to be beneficial to the Farmers, or consumers. Working together, Mrs. Calderan Bell, stated was a better way to work then working against each other. She finished with stating "keep the farms in farmer's markets". This conversation about farmer's markets in the County inspired Danny Howard, Gwen McPhail, Kerrie Roach, Kim Alexander and the rest of the AAB to engage in a conversation about methods to encourage unity at Farmer's market. Mrs. McPhail of the FARM farmer's market noted that there was an attempt to unify the farmer's markets however the individual cities see benefits from having their own markets. Dr. Drake mentioned that co-ops work, at a national level because financial buy-in is the key to make things work.

Josh McCall, an agriculture teacher with Oconee County, spoke about the statistics involved in being an agricultural teacher in the County. There are currently seven ag. teachers in the County and over 600 ag. students. Mr. McCall believes that additional funds should be put in place to finance more agricultural teachers and programs.

Heather Ramsay, of USDA NRCS, came and spoke of the importance of working together. She spoke of the effectiveness of getting money for on-farm energy. Mrs. Ramsay stated them, the NRCS, work with hundreds of farmers per year and probably have met with every farmer in the County. Mrs. Ramsay stated that we are losing are most fertile soils at an alarming rate and should look to protect them. Utilization of Conversation easements have put more than 3500 acres of farmland into permanent conservation.

Tim Donald, a poultry and beef farmer, who is on the S.C. Farm Bureau and a founding member of the Heritage Fair, spoke about the future of farming needs in the County. He noted that the County should finance the FARM center. Mr. Donald noted that showing the true value of agriculture in the County is the only way to gain notoriety and additional funds. He noted that working together is the only way forward. Mrs. McPhail came up and addressed some FARM center challenges and that Agriculture should be an element in the 202 Comprehensive Plan. Scott Park, of Upstate Forever came and mentioned that there is money available to put land in to Conservation Easements.

Pat Williams, of the Cattleman's Association and owner of Cane Creek Farms noted how sprawl is eating the land and that in 2004 he was leasing 704 acres and this year only 106 acres for his cattle due to availability. Mr. Williams questioned why the County is spending money to take 1000 acres of prime farmland out of production by creating industrial parks that there is not enough employment for.

Les McCall, of Lake Hartwell Country, that manages the Burt Garrison Agricultural Museum and the Century Farms program spoke about the availability of resources and outreach that Lake Hartwell Country can offer.

Stanley Gibson, chairman of the FARM Center, spoke about the need for communication between all entities. He noted about the generosity of the County in regards to the FARM center. He also spoke about needing people and organizations, such as the Cattleman, to reach out to him if they would like to participate.

Mr. Blanton thanked all those in attendance for participating.

5. Discussion on Protecting Agricultural Lands

Mr. Chapman brought up an Ordinance from Santa Barbara County, California, that has created buffers between non-agricultural uses being placed next to agricultural uses. Dr. Drake, spoke in full support of this noting that a buffer would help regarding application of pesticides and herbicides on farms. Mr. Williams noted that some of Santa Barbara's language would not be beneficial to Oconee County. Mr. Hollifield made a motion to send a recommendation to the Planning & Economic Development Committee recommending the creation of buffers between new non-agricultural uses being developed next to existing agricultural uses. Mrs. Alexander seconded the motion, vote was unanimous.

6. Discussion on Marketing and Advertising of the AAB

A brief discussion was held regarding the Agricultural Directory and the Market-To-Table contest.

7. Old Business

None

8. New Business

None

9. Adjourn

Douglas Hollifield made the motion to adjourn, Kim alexander seconded it. 6-0 in favor