

6:00 PM, Monday, March 13, 2023
FARM CAFE
2154 SOUTH CAROLINA 49, WESTMINSTER SC 29693

Members Present

Christopher Talley
Joshua Owens
Charlie Whiten
Rex Blanton
Kim Alexander
Tessa Moxley

Staff Present

James Coley

Media Present

None

1. **Call to order- Ms. Alexander** called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.
2. **Moment of silence**
3. **Invocation**
4. **Pledge of allegiance**
5. **Approval of minutes-** February 13, 2023. Mr. Whiten made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Blanton. Ms. Alexander called for a vote. The motion passed 4/0.
6. **Presentations [**
 - Mission goals and vision
 - Members of the board and contact information
 - i. Joshua Owens-Newest member of the Ag Advisory Board
 - Partner organizations
 - Citizen initiated zoning
 - i. Mr. Coley-50 contiguous acres can opt in to any zoning districts the county has available.
7. **Public Comment Session [3 minutes per person] *If you are not able to attend in person and you have a comment, you may submit it by contacting the Planning Department at planninginfo@oconeesc.com or 864-638-4218, so that we may receive your comment and read it into the record***
 - Tim Donald-Farm Bureau
 - i. Four bills on the house floor at the moment
 - ii. Farmland loss is primary issue
 - iii. Farm Bureau is about personal property rights. Zoning is a tool you can use to protect ag land.

- 1. Mr. Donald zoned his property personally
 - iv. Developers will not be as interested in land that is concentrated with ag zoned land
 - v. "300 thousand acres lost to development in past 15 years"
 - vi. Farm Bureau of SC as a land trust will focus specifically on ag land. SC is the first farm Bureau to do land trust work.
 - vii. Kickoff event on Cotton Hill
 - 1. April 18th (subject to change)
 - viii. Land that is zoned Ag can also be put in a conservation easement
 - ix. Mr. Blanton-how can conservation boards work together?
 - 1. State has 30 million in the State Bank
 - a. April 12 open house bbq dinner-protect oconee county land
 - x. Wants more transparency from County Council
- o Ms. Alexander-can we recruit the type of industry farmers need and give the farm center back the industrial park?
 - i. Mr. Donald-we should still be there, though they might consider some type of ag industry-maybe equipment manufacturing, maybe poultry houses, distribution centers do not create jobs
 - ii. Justin Ables-we are very likely to get warehouses and distribution centers due to our strategic location on the 85 corridor. However, there doesn't seem to be any plan, as the location has been sitting unused for 18 years.
 - iii. Gwen McPhail-can we ask that our economic development be focused on Ag
 - 1. Ms. Alexander-We can request that Council use the pad for agriculture development based on feedback from our community meetings. Request that a time limit be placed on endeavors for other economic recruitment.
 - iv. Discussion ensued about what industries related to agriculture could be recruited, bearing in mind the strategic location of the railway and the already established poultry industry (380 houses in the county). General consensus is that whatever industry ends up at the commerce park needs to support farmers and ag, as that is the industry that already exists in the area.
 - v. Discussion ensued about the location of the FARM center and the importance of the location and infrastructure to the success of farmer markets. The FARM center is at a point where big investments are being made into building further infrastructure, therefore there is a deadline for being able to move the facility. Otherwise there will be too much investment in the current location. Gwen McPhail believes that the board of the FARM center would be interested in the location of the center being moved to the commerce park, but this is a very time sensitive issue.
 - o Tim Donald-it will be up to the farmers to recruit industry that benefits the Ag sector of Oconee County

- Gwen McPhail-updated feasibility survey on having an ag center that could potentially host national events
- Justin Ables-Would like to see the Ag board present to council more regularly-once a quarter. The council needs to be reminded about Ag concerns consistently.

8. Discussions [to include vote and/or action on matters brought up in discussion if required]

- Ms. Alexander-will bring a report to council backed by the ag community, stressing the economic impact of ag in the county and push the council to use the Golden Corner Commerce Park as the ag center

Adjourn: Mr. Blanton made a motion to adjourn at 7:34, seconded by Ms. Moxley, and approved 5/0.