

## Minutes

6:00 PM, Monday, February 12, 2024  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

### Members Present

Tessa Moxley  
Charlie Whiten  
Nate Duncan  
Kim Alexander  
Trent Smith

### Staff Present

James Coley

### Media Present

None

1. **Call to order-** Ms. Alexander called the February 12th meeting to order at 6:01pm.
2. **Moment of silence**
3. **Invocation**
4. **Pledge of allegiance**
5. **Approval of minutes-** January 8, 2023. Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes seconded by Mr. Whiten and approved 5/0.
6. **Discussion-** Farmer's Breakfast
  - Ms. Moxley gave a summary of the Farmers' breakfast in January and notified the Ag Board of the upcoming breakfast on February 28th at 7:30am at the Ag building in Walhalla. Jason Davis will be presenting about cost-share opportunities through NRCS.
7. **Public discussion 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](mailto:planninginfo@oconeesc.com) or 864-638-4218, so that we may receive your comment and read it into the record*
8. **Discussion** [to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up in discussion if required].
  - Letter of support

Mr. Whiten made a motion to draft a letter in support of the RFSI grant funds going to the FARM center if they decide to apply, seconded by Mr. Smith and approved 5/0.

- Agricultural Education in Oconee County
  - i. West Oak High School is compiling a list of farms for students to potentially do SAEs and could use some assistance getting contacts.
  - ii. Seneca High and Walhalla High have started teaching a new class, Equipment Operation and Maintenance and Ag Mech. They both

- expressed that there is a need for more types of farm equipment in order to teach the kids the ins and outs of farm tech.
- iii. Orchard Park Elementary does not currently have an ag ed class, but they have started an after school program that happens once a week called “Garden Gurus”
    - 1. They are currently the only elementary school with an ag related program
    - 2. Just won a Bee Grant for beekeeping
  - iv. Jeff Blackwell-beekeeper facilitating the installation of observation hives. Every school in the county currently has one, but there has not been much of a return on the investment, as some of the hives have not been maintained and there has been no growth.
  - o Ms. Alexander presented the idea of a Contest to promote Ag in Oconee County for the students in k-12. This would be teacher-sponsored, and the ag board would be responsible for the prizes to be awarded.
  - o Some of the ideas and input from the teachers present included:
    - 1. High school kids could present their SAE projects as posters
    - 2. Research based-create a map of the types and locations of farms in oconee county with potential farm spotlights
    - 3. Poster contest: “Ag in Oconee County”
    - 4. Ms. Swaggert of Seneca High suggested that there is an opportunity for the elementary students to do a project based off of the heritage fair Ag Learning Day

Ms. Moxley Made a motion to do a poster contest supporting agriculture in Oconee County for high school and middle school students in the spring of 2024 with the deadline being may 1st, to be judged by the planning department, and awards to be presented by County Council in May. The Elementary School contest will be held in the Fall. The motion was seconded by Mr. Whiten and approved 5/0.

- Discussion ensued about the potential programs that could be run through Ag Ed in the County, and the type of buy-in that would be required from farmers, farm organizations, Clemson University, and the school district. The general consensus was that the youth are the future of Ag in the county, and they do not currently have the resources and education required to give them a good start.
- Further discussion ensued about the needs for Ag teachers to be better equipped to improve Ag Ed in Oconee County. Teachers expressed that they are currently working many more weeks worth of days than they are being paid for, due to the extent of care required to properly maintain Ag programs in regards to animal and plant care and quality curriculum.

Mr. Smith made a motion to write a letter to the School Board stating that Ag teachers in the county must be better supported in order to run successful Ag Ed programing in the county, therefore should be put on the 240 day salary. The motion was seconded by Mr. Whiten and approved 5/0.

- 9. Adjourn:** Mr. Whiten made a motion to adjourn at 7:18pm, seconded by Mr. Smith and approved 5/0.

