



MINUTES

TASK FORCE ON AGRICULTURE

September 27, 2022

10:00 A.M.

County Council Chambers
Oconee County Administrative Offices
415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC

Oconee County Task Force on Agriculture met at 10:00 A.M. in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with District 3 County Councilman Paul Cain, County Administrator Amanda F. Brock, County Planning and Zoning Director James Coley, Lisa Jones with LJC, and Members of the Task Force on Agriculture as follows: Natalie Arnold, Stanley Gibson, Bob Winchester, Emily Hitchcock, and Frankie Pearson.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com/council]. In addition, it was made available [upon request] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Call to Order

Councilman Paul Cain called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. with an overview of the Oconee County Resolution 2022-15 that established the Task Force on Agriculture.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Pearson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Winchester, approved 4 – 1, to add the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the agenda.

Introductions

Members introduced themselves.

Election of Officers

Ms. Brock nominated Mr. Pearson as the Task Force Chairman. Mr. Pearson accepted.

Mr. Pearson nominated Ms. Hitchcock as the Vice-Chair. Ms. Hitchcock accepted.

Ms. Brock nominated Ms. Arnold as Secretary. Ms. Arnold accepted.

Overview of Oconee County Resolution 2022-15

Ms. Brock provided highlights regarding Resolution 2022-15 and reiterated that the role of the Task Force is to accomplish the specific goals outlined in the resolution.

Meeting Schedule

The Task Force established a meeting schedule, reflected below. Meetings will occur on the fourth Monday of the month in Oconee County Council Chambers. Ms. Jones may attend every other meeting virtually as noted below in parentheses.

Tuesday, September 27, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

Monday, October 24, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. (LJ virtual option)

Monday, November 21, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

*Monday, December 19, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. (LJ virtual option) - This meeting will occur on the third Monday due to the Christmas holiday.

Monday, January 23, 2023, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

*Monday, February 27, 2023, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. (meeting will occur if needed, to be determined at the January 23 meeting, virtual option)

Mr. Cain let the Task Force know that Billy Van Pelt from American Farmland Trust will be giving a presentation to County Council on October 4 about farmland under threat in South Carolina. He expressed interest in having the Task Force attend.

Discussion (led by Lisa Jones with LJC, LLC)

Ms. Jones outlined the work that she will be leading with the Task Force to collect data, identify gaps, and compile recommendations for Council. She acknowledged that there will be differences of opinion, and that she will attempt to reflect the consensus of the Task Force with her recommendations.

Mr. Cain requested that the Task Force stay focused on agricultural land that is used for food production.

Ms. Jones asked the Task Force to consider the following questions: What opportunities exist in the county to further agriculture? What do you hope to see result from the Task Force? What resources currently exist that could help the Task Force recommendations? Ms. Jones agreed to create and distribute a survey with these questions.

The discussion turned to maps that reflect current and future land use, prime soils and growth projections. Maps were printed during the meeting and provided to Task Force members.

An outreach plan and strategy for partners was identified. In most cases, a partner will be contacted by the designated Task Force member by email. In a few cases, individuals volunteered to call the partner. Ms. Jones will follow up with Task Force members to ensure the outreach occurs. She will create an email template.

Ms. Brock extended invitations to the Task Force (and ticket purchases) for the Agricultural Appreciation Banquet on November 17 at 6:00 P.M.

Adjourn

Mr. Winchester made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 12:00 P.M.