

## MINUTES

### **Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District** Virtual Zoom Meeting

Meeting Number: 3 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board)    Date: June 18, 2020

#### **Advisory Board Present:**

Will Wilson – Chair – At Large  
Nicole Connelly – Vice Chair – Little River VAD  
Mark Waller – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair – Farm Bureau Rep.  
Heidi Carter – BOCC Representative  
David Harris – SWCD Board Representative  
John Monroe – At Large  
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD  
Nancy Herndon – Cape Fear VAD

#### **Others Present:**

Eddie Culberson – Soil & Water  
Mike Dupree – Soil & Water  
Cherri Smith – Soil & Water  
Jane Korest – Open Space  
Celeste Burns – Open Space  
Donna Rewalt – Cooperative Extension  
Ashley Troth – Cooperative Extension  
Ryan Eaves – Stormwater and Erosion Control  
McKenzie Myers – Stormwater and Erosion Control  
Lauren Neaves – Stormwater and Erosion Control  
Keith Readling – Raftelis  
Mark Senior – WK Dickson  
Inga Kennedy – PEQ Consultants  
Ashley Meredith – Hub Farm

*The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, June 18, 2020 and called to order at 8:02 am by the Chair. The meeting was held as a virtual Zoom meeting.*

1. **County Stormwater Utility Fee** – Ryan Eaves and McKenzie Myers presented background information on the purpose for the Stormwater Utility Fee and how it is calculated.
  - Durham County has three nutrient sensitive watersheds including the Neuse River Basin, Falls Lake, and Jordan Lake.
  - The State of North Carolina has mandated that the County reduce nutrient loading (particularly nitrogen) in these watersheds
  - To fund this mandate, Durham County has adopted a Stormwater Utility Fee that will be implemented in Fiscal Year 2021 and applies to all residential, industrial, educational, and agricultural properties outside of the City of Durham.
  - The fee calculation is based on impervious surface that is converted to Equivalent Runoff Units (ERU). One ERU = 4,300 sf with a cost of \$24 per ERU. This fee only covers one-third of the estimated \$70 million cost to implement this mandate
  - There are three residential tiers based on the amount of impervious surface with the most expensive tier (Tier 3) costing the homeowner \$48 annually. Agricultural properties with a residence are charged as a residential tier. Non-single-family residential properties pay per ERU.

There was much discussion regarding the fairness of this Utility Fee to farmers since they are already subject to the agricultural component of existing watershed rules, and larger parcels of land typically have more infiltration and contribute far fewer pollutants to waterways than suburban and urban areas.

After its initial implementation, Stormwater and Erosion Control will be looking at ways that the cost of this Utility Fee can be mitigated with on-site best management practices and

conservation measures. This agency will also be doing public education regarding nutrient reductions particularly as it relates to the proper application rates of fertilizer on suburban properties.

Keith Reading provided a breakdown of the Stormwater Utility Fee for the 624 properties in unincorporated areas of Durham County that are classified as agricultural, silvicultural, and horticultural. The total revenue collected from these properties after implementation will be \$46,000 with the following breakdown:

33 properties - \$12 annually  
102 properties - \$24 annually  
400 properties - \$48 annually  
33 properties - \$72 - \$120 annually  
53 properties - \$121 - \$500 annually  
3 properties - > \$500

2. **Approval of Board Minutes from May 2020** – Motion made by John Monroe to approve the minutes, seconded by Mark Waller. Motion passed.
3. **Agriculture Economic Development Update** – Mike Dupree reported that the Durham County Agriculture Economic Development grant application was approved for \$50,000. The Grant Committee met on June 9 and set three training dates for July 21, 23, and 28 with applications due on August 31.
4. **FPAB Budget** – Cherri Smith reported that \$3,375 was allocated to the FPAB for FY 20/21.
5. **Easements/Open Space** – Jane Korest provided a recap of her report in May regarding easement closings and easements in the works. In addition, following submission of the application for NRCS funding for an easement on 58 acres of Mike Garret’s farm on Harris Mill Road, the NRCS conducted a site visit to this property. Jane is optimistic that this project will be awarded a Federal Farmland Grant.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **Farmland Board Representative on the South Durham Farmers Market Board** – Nancy Herndon agreed to serve as the Farmland Board Representative.  
  
Will Wilson motioned to appoint Nancy Herndon as the Farmland Board Representative on the South Durham Farmers Market Board. Heidi Carter seconded the motion. Motion passed.
2. **Durham Open Space & Trails (DOST) Representative on the FPAB** – Jane Korest reported that as of the last DOST meeting on June 17, 2020, no one has volunteered to be the representative on the FPAB, but participation in this meeting was sparse. Jane will follow up to try and secure a volunteer.
3. **Cooperative Extension** – Ashley Troth reported that the County Commissioners approved a new Agricultural Extension Agent to work with small farms and local foods. Ideally, this new agent will also have some livestock experience.

**Next Meeting** – July 16, 2020 at 8 a.m. The meeting will be held as a virtual Zoom meeting.

**Adjourn** – With no further discussion or business, Chair, Will Wilson adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m.

Will Wilson  
Chairman

Cherri Smith  
Soil and Water

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Date approved