

MINUTES

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

Meeting Number: 7 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: December 17, 2020

Advisory Board Present:

Nicole Connelly – Chair – Little River VAD
Heidi Carter – BOCC Representative
Nancy Herndon – Cape Fear VAD
Neil Frank – At Large
David Heeks – At Large

Others Present:

Eddie Culberson – Soil & Water
Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Mike Dupree – Soil & Water
Cherri Smith – Soil & Water
Jane Korest – Open Space
Celeste Burns – Open Space
Ashley Troth – Cooperative Extension
Janel Ohletz – Cooperative Extension
Matthew Eagle – guest

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, December 17, 2020 and called to order at 8:03 am by the Chair. The meeting was held as a virtual Zoom meeting.

1. **FPAB Budget Update** – Lisa Marochak reported that \$457.41 has been spent from the budget to purchase lumber for the VAD sign frames leaving \$2,917.59 to be spent by the end of the fiscal year. The FPAB approved the expenditure of these funds at the November 2020 meeting. The plan for the remaining funds should be in place by March of 2021 in order to have the money spent by end of June 2020.

Several ideas were discussed for the remaining funds including the purchase of more VAD signs, donation to the Hub Farm, and donations to various public schools. Mike Dupree has volunteered to find out from the teachers at the public schools with known projects in the works to get more specifics on their financial needs.

2. **FPAB Membership** – Nicole Connelly reported that the Nominating Committee will bring recommendations to the Board for the three At Large vacancies in January of 2021. Currently, there are three applications for these vacancies from Matthew Eagle, Samantha Gasson, and Lindsay White.
3. **Agriculture Economic Development (AED)** – Mike Dupree reported on the following:
 - The 9-member AED Grant Committee has a vacancy since Will Wilson has stepped down as Chair of the FPAB. Anyone on the FPAB who is interested in serving on this Committee should contact Mike Dupree.
 - Three virtual Farmer Breakfast trainings have been scheduled and include:
 - 1) January 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm – Agency staff will present the local, state, and federal funding opportunities for farmers.
 - 2) February 9, 2021 at 6:00 pm – Farmer Food Share – Networking buying programs for Durham farmers will be presented.
 - 3) February 18, 2021 at 6:00 pm – The North Carolina Department of Agriculture will present information on the management of fire ants.

There was discussion about Farmer Food Share and the state rule that requires the Durham Public School system to only buy produce from farmers who are Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certified.

4. **Easements/Open Space** –

- Jane Korest reported that the closing of 81 acres of the Scotty McFarland Farm should hopefully happen by the end of 2020. Other projects in the works include the following farms: Len Needham, Michael Garrett, additional parcels on Douglas Daye’s farm, and the second Scotty McFarland parcel.
- Celeste Burns reported that National Guard Cooperative Agreement is underway and when in place will provide another funding source for properties within a 1-mile buffer around Camp Butner.
- Janel Ohletz reported that she is working with NC State University to create a Land Summit Guide for Durham County like the one that has already been completed for Orange County.

5. **Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD)** –

- There are currently 89 farms enrolled in the VAD Program comprising over 7,400 acres.

New Business – Nicole Connelly reminded the FPAB that in addition to filling the three At Large vacancies, the Chair, Vice Chair, and 2nd Vice Chair will be elected at the January 2021 meeting.

Next Meeting – January 21, 2021 at 8 a.m. The meeting will be held as a virtual Zoom meeting.

Adjourn – With no further discussion or business, Chair, Nicole Connelly adjourned the meeting at 8:51 a.m.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Cherri Smith
Soil and Water

January 21, 2021
Date approved