

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 4 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: April 16, 2026

Advisory Board Present:

Nicole Connelly – Chair, Little River VAD
Carolyn Rose-Seed – At Large
Kenny Browning – Eno River VAD
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD
Samantha Gasson – At Large
Matthew Eagle – At Large
Deborah Leucken – DOST Representative
Helena Cragg – At Large
Douglas Daye – Flat River VAD

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
Celeste Burns – Open Space & Real Estate
Jill Fusco – Open Space & Real Estate
Gerry Cohn
Raina Goldstein Bunnag
Donna Stainback
Pam Williams
David Hoffman

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held in a hybrid format on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at Durham Farm Bureau. This meeting was called to order at 6:04pm by the chair, Nicole Connelly.

1. Nicole Connelly opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.
2. **Presentation** – Guest, Donna Stainback with Preserve Rural Durham presented to group on the concerns the proposed 4802 Cheek Road development will bring to agriculture in the area, if approved. Discussion by board followed the presentation. Talmage Layton made a motion to write a letter that will provide the Board's input on this matter to the City Council and County Commissioners. Samantha Gasson seconded the motion. All present voted in favor. Nicole Connelly will write draft letter for Helena Cragg to review and edit.
3. **Approval of February and March Board Minutes** – Motion made by Kenny Browning to accept the February and March meeting minutes as submitted. Helena Cragg seconded the motion. With no discussion, vote was called. All in favor; motion passed.
4. **Financial Update** – Sherry Scully provided balance of board's account as provided by Lisa Marochak. The cost estimates for food and parking for the June 11th Retreat are as follows: maximum of \$500 for boxed lunches, snacks, lemonade and coffee; maximum of \$270 for parking validation for 20 people. Samantha Gasson made a motion to approve these expenses not to exceed the maximum costs provided. Kenny Browning seconded. All in favor; motion passed. Staff will request members and staff to RSVP for the retreat so that an exact number of lunches and passes may be purchased.

Staff have SWAG quotes estimated. Sherry will reach out to teachers to determine needs that the Farmland Board may be able to provide. These purchase options will be presented after exact cost of retreat is determined. No, VAD sign materials needed at this time.
5. **Farmland Protection Plan Update** – Gerry Cohn brought members up to date on the current status of Farmland Protection Plan, providing specific steps he will take to edit the draft and provide the final product. He asked the Board what their main priorities of the plan are and provided his thoughts of organizing into seven themes. Board provided feedback to Gerry in response. Additionally, Nicole Connelly requested that Gerry provide "homework" to the board at the next meeting.

Additionally, Donna Rewalt has lined up two facilitators (both County Employees) to assist with the Board Retreat.

6. **Easements/Open Space Update** – Celeste Burns notified the Board of two conservation easement closings since the last meeting: Clara Glenn and Neil Frank. She anticipates two additional closings in April and May. Durham Open Space has been invited to host the national NRCS easement staff meeting in May.

Additionally, Open Space staff is working with Preservation Durham to document oral histories of Durham farmers and landowners.

Celeste thanked the Board for their support of the Farmland Protection Resolution presented at the March 23 BOCC meeting.

7. **Soil & Water Conservation District Update** – Sherry Scully provided update:

- Ag Economic Development Committee meeting on 21st of April to discuss updates to FY 27 program.
- Eagle stream Restoration project complete.
- Two Durham Schools will advance to state Envirothon competition in April.
- Resource Conservation Workshop applications are being accepted now.
- Durham/Orange Pond Clinic will be held on May 16, 9-1. Flyer provided.
- Eddie Culberson is retiring on June 30. Celebration will be held on June 25 at Redwood Ruritan from 2-4pm.
- Director position has been posted.
- Career Days and Informational Booths at Community Events have been well attended by Soil & Water staff.

8. **Cooperative Extension Update** – Raina Bunnag present to provide report:

- Cooperative Extension's Report to the Community will be held Wednesday, May 6, 8:30-10:30 at Briggs Avenue Community Garden
- Central Piedmont Junior Livestock Show and Sale was a success with 121 participants (over 20 from Durham County)
- Cattle Reproduction Workshop will be held in June. This workshop is full with a long waitlist and will be offered again soon.
- BOCC approved the Golden Leaf Grant received to support the Farm Campus. Hiring a farm manager will be the first step.
- June 7th is Durham Hunger Day.

9. **Durham Open Space and Trails Commission Update** – Deborah Leucken provided update:

DOST is working on getting several long-delayed, fully funded, multi-use trails in Durham unstuck from bureaucratic entanglements and inaction, which have delayed construction for 4 years or more. All three provide needed connections between existing trails, including the downtown Durham Rail Trail, which would provide connections that bikes and pedestrians could use for the Downtown Durham Farmers' Market.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Chair Nicole Connelly adjourned the meeting at 7:33 pm.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

May 21, 2026
Date approved

