

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 2 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: February 12, 2026

Advisory Board Present:

Nicole Connelly – Chair, Little River VAD
John Cowan – Cape Fear VAD
Carolyn Rose-Seed – At Large
David Harris – SWCD Board
Mark Waller – Farm Bureau Representative
Kenny Browning – Eno River VAD
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD
Michelle Burton – Board of County Commissioner
Samantha Gasson – At Large

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
Celeste Burns – Open Space & Real Estate
Donna Rewalt - Durham Cooperative Extension
Max Jeffers
Gerry Cohn
Scott Brummel

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, February 12, 2026, at Durham Cooperative Extension. This meeting was called to order at 10:33 am by the chair, Nicole Connelly.

1. Nicole Connelly opened the meeting. Mark Waller then presided.
2. **Approval of January Board Minutes** – Motion made by David Harris to approve the December meeting minutes as submitted. Talmage Layton seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed.
3. **Financial Update** – Lisa Marochak provided financial report. Sherry Scully noted that staff determined costs of SWAG as requested in January meeting. However, staff recommended that Board wait on purchases until costs of Farmland Plan are determined. David Harris made motion to accept the Financial Report. Talmage Layton seconded. All present voted in favor.
4. **Breakfast Recap** – Sherry Scully announced that 45 people registered for February breakfast. There were 36 in attendance. Breakfast was prepared by Cheralyn Berry and staff. All costs will be reimbursed by Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation.
5. **Farmland Protection Plan Update** – Lisa Marochak reported that she is working with County to produce contract with Gerry Cohn.

Samantha Gasson requested that when the Farmland Protection Plan revision is proposed to the BOCC, an update of outcomes of original plan is shared with them.

6. **BOCC Resolution** – Celeste Burns requested that Board allow her to pursue being added to a March BOCC Work Session to recognize 25 years of Farmland Protection Program success. Board in favor. Celeste will provide resolution information to Lisa who will upload the request.
7. **Easements/Open Space** – Celeste Burns reported that all projects are still in motion.
8. **Soil & Water Conservation District Update** – Sherry Scully provided update on the Ag Economic Development Grant Program. Lisa Marochak informed Board of education updates: All poster, essay,

slideshow, and speech contest entries were received this week. The Soil & Water Bookmark contest is open for K-2nd grade and will close April 8. Resource Conservation Workshop applications are being accepted now. Environmental Educator of the year application is due March 31. Annual Pond Clinic will be held on May 19.

9. **Cooperative Extension Update** – Donna Rewalt provided update. Golden Leaf Grant has been awarded to Durham County. Funds, in the amount of \$475,000, will support a farm manager position, infrastructure, etc. in a three-year period.

March 22-28 is Small Farms Week for NC

To support food insecurity, the Plant-A-Row effort is being showcased at a community interest meeting on February 23 at 6:00pm at Durham County Cooperative Extension.

10. **Durham Open Space and Trails Commission Update** – Deborah Luecken not present. Mark Waller and Celeste Burns provided report: DOST is involved with the Durham Athletic Park Redevelopment; Deborah Luecken presented DOST Commission’s Annual Report to City/County Planning last month.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Vice Chair Waller adjourned the meeting at 11:22 am.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

April 16, 2026
Date approved