

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 5 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: September 19, 2024

Advisory Board Present:

Nicole Connelly – Chair, Little River VAD
Heidi Carter – County Commissioner
David Heeks – At Large
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD
Mark Waller – Farm Bureau Representative
Matthew Eagle – At Large
Neil Frank – At Large
Chris Young – Business Representative
Kenny Browning – Eno River VAD
Samantha Gasson – At Large
Deborah Luecken – DOST Representative
Douglas Daye – Flat River VAD
David Harris – SWCD Board Representative

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
Celeste Burns – Open Space & Real Estate
David Bradley – Open Space & Real Estate
Heidi Grable – Bahama Ruritan Club President

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, September 19, 2024 in a hybrid format. This meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by the Chair, Nicole Connelly.

1. Nicole Connelly opened meeting and welcomed everyone. New member and DOST Representative, Deborah Luecken and several guests present. Introductions made by everyone present.
2. **Approval of July Board Minutes** – Nicole Connelly requested approval of the July meeting minutes submitted. Motion was made by Kenny Browning and seconded by Mark Waller. Nicole called for vote; motion passed.
3. **Financial Report** – Lisa Marochak reminded Board that allocation of \$3,037 minus the amount of \$500 approved to be held and available for VAD signs is \$2,537. Nicole reported that Carrington Middle School has a new Ag teacher and asked all members to consider options to support the agricultural education in the schools.
4. **Membership Update** – Lisa Marochak reminded Board that there are still two vacant board positions. Lindsay White's position is an at-large, FPAB appointed position. If members have anyone they would like to recommend, please let Nicole, Lisa or Sherry know. Nancy Herndon's Cape Fear VAD position, appointed by BOCC is also vacant. This position has been advertised by County Manager's office. We have heard of one individual's interest. No applications have been received at this time.
5. **VAD Update** – Lisa Marochak provided report by Sherry Scully. Nicole Connelly recused herself from the meeting for this agenda item. Mark Waller, Vice Chair ran the meeting. Three VAD applications were presented to Board for approval:
 - Jonathan Lasher – 14 acres on Johnson Mill Rd
 - Nicole Connelly and Michael Austin – 17.7 acres on Mason Rd
 - Michael and Bonnie Biggs – additional 12.12 acres on Stallings Rd

Kenny Browning motioned to approve these there VAD applications. Matthew Eagle seconded the motion. No discussion. All in favor, motion passed.

6. **Easements/Open Space Update** – Celeste Burns reported that NRCS funding has been secured for Neil Frank’s 30-acre easement on Moores Mill Rd. Applications are being processed for Cliff Teasley and Ken Wolfe. In addition, Wesley Poole has applied to include two additional parcels within the National Guard’s one-mile protected buffer area. Celeste anticipates that 50% of these two easements will be funded by National Guard. She requested support of the board to move forward with these applications. Kenny Browning made the motion to support Celeste moving forward with these applications for funding. Matthew Eagle seconded. All members voted in favor and motion passed. ([Tilley Farm Phase 3 Map](#))
7. **Farm Survey** – Lisa Marochak requested that everyone complete and spread the word about farm survey (to support Farmland Plan update) that was provided through email. Paper copies are available as well.
8. **Farmer Breakfast** – Lisa Marochak reminded board and guests that a community engagement meeting will be held at night in the fall for the Farmland Plan Update. Discussion determined that Farmer Breakfasts will be scheduled for December 12th, January 16th and February 20th from 8-10am with board meeting following breakfasts. Topics of interest are a panel of speakers concerning Tax (Schedule F), Insurance, etc. Staff will poll Board to determine additional topics for breakfasts.

Heidi Grable, guest, came to request opportunity for Bahama Ruritan Club to host an expo to showcase what the farming community is doing for the public. Heidi will send out possible Sunday dates for an event to be held from 2-5pm in the winter.
9. **Ag Economic Development Grant Update** – Lisa Marochak provided report by Sherry Scully. Forty-eight applications received requesting \$384,370 in grant funds with a total expected project cost of \$473,893. Committee reviewed all applications and met on September 12 to determine allocation of funds. 28 “Farmer” and 3 “School” applicants will receive AED grant funding. Staff is working to meet with applicants and create contracts.
10. **Cooperative Extension Update** – (provided prior to meeting by John Lyttle)
 - 9/26 – Tri County Pasture Field Day with Soil and Water
 - 10/7 – Farm Campus Community Engagement findings reported to BOCC
 - 10/14 – NCA&T Farm Tour (includes four Durham farms)
 - 10/22 – “Soil Health, Crop Rotation and Cover Crops” webinar with CEFS
 - 10/23 and 10/24 – DPS Hub Farm workshop on building habitats for pollinators

New Business

- Discussion on transportation from Northern High School to Hub Farm was held. Lisa Marochak will inquire with Northern High School to find out if this is an issue.
- Nicole Connelly recognized that a subcommittee of board will be meeting prior to the October meeting to discuss needed updates to Durham’s Farmland Protection Ordinance.

Next Meeting – October 17 at 6:00pm at the Durham Farm Bureau office or online.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Chair Connelly adjourned the meeting at 7:07pm.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

November 21, 2024
Date approved