

# Orange County Agricultural Preservation Board

## Approved Meeting Summary: May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Environmental & Agricultural Center—Food Lab  
306 Revere Rd., Hillsborough, NC  
7:30 p.m.

**Members Present:** Anderson, Compton, Dawson, McAdams, McKnight, McPherson, R. Parker, Ranells, Redding, Sainers, Shambley, and Vanhook

**Members Absent:** Finley, Woods, A. Parker

**Guests:** Bonnie Hammersley, Orange Co. Manager; Mike Lanier, Cooperative Extension; Bob Marotto, Director, Animal Services; Cooper Hatch, Program Coordinator, Animal Services

**Staff:** David Stancil, Director DEAPR; Gail Hughes, Resource Conservation Coordinator-DEAPR-Orange Soil and Water; Peter Sandbeck, Cultural Resources Coordinator; Mike Ortosky, Ag Economic Development Coordinator

1. **Call to order:** Chair McPherson called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.
2. **Chair Comments/Introductions:** Chair McPherson recognized the guests.
3. **Considerations of Additions to Agenda:** None
4. **Meeting Summary/Minutes:** March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (**Attachment 1**): Vanhook moved to accept the minutes/summary; seconded by McAdams; motion carried.
5. **Discussion Items:**
  - a) **Orange County Agricultural Trust Fund Proposal (Attachment 2):** Dawson reviewed the highlights of the proposal discussed at the March meeting. This is supported by the Food Council and the APB. He noted that the farmers are the ones who maintain green space and protect the watersheds from development in Orange County. Farmland places less demand on county services and thus is good for the county budget: costs 70 cents per dollar of tax collected versus \$1.25 for developed land that requires full services. The funds generated by this proposal are collected when land goes out of farm use. This program could partner with the Lands Legacy/Ag Conservation Easement and Ag Grant programs, and thus would channel funds into these two existing programs that are already operating very effectively; no new staff needed. County Manager Hammersley responded that the county already provides support through these two programs. Right now the recaptured Present Use Value funds now go into the general fund. That amount in essence already supports the county's ag programs but is not directly allocated to those programs. The proposed new County budget already requires a tax increase to cover a projected deficit of \$2.8 million. A large part of the budget shortfall comes from the loss of impact fees from developers, which is nearly \$3 million. This is a good idea but the resources are not currently available. The BOCC showed support for the Food Council by establishing the new coordinator position to be funded by the county and the towns. She

could not presently recommend this to the BOCC due to the present tax increase proposals. Discussion followed. This idea should remain under consideration. Looking ahead, the budget process begins around December before the June adoption date. Department directors, through the functional leadership team, develop budget proposals through a team process. The trust fund proposal could be brought forward in next year's budget by DEAPR. Remember if it requires an additional expenditure, then a funding source will be required. Present Use recapture could be targeted as a funding source, but we have to remember that this revenue is already being relied on for other county expenditures, so new money would have to be found somewhere else to offset. The APB can ask DEAPR to initiate a budget request late this fall so that it gets to her by February.

## 6. Items for Decision:

- a) **New VAD/EVAD Applications (Attachment 2):** Hughes presented the current applications listed below. All of these farms meet the requirements/criteria for VAD/EVAD enrollment.
- **McKee Family (Virginia McKee and Heirs):** 162.28 acres for VAD, Caldwell Ag District. The farm is in cattle, hayland, small grains and managed woodland. Redding moved to approve, seconded by Compton; motion carried.
  - **Mark Miller: 177.74** acres for VAD, Caldwell Ag District. The farm is in pasture, beef cattle and hayland. McAdams moved to approve, seconded by Vanhook; motion carried.

Hughes reported that with approval of these farms, this will bring us up to 15,059 acres in VAD and EVAD. Farms approved tonight and those from the March meeting will go to the BOCC on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

## 7. Informational Items/Future Agenda Items:

- a. **Presentation by Animal Services staff regarding the Working Cats program:** Bob Marotto and Cooper Hatch presented an update on this program. They have had good success, much of it by word of mouth. At one farm they captured almost 60 cats over a period of time, spayed/neutered them, gave vaccinations and microchips, then returned them to the farm. They continue to receive grants and donations to fund this effort. They continue to look for opportunities to work with farmers and landowners to continue this effort. They can provide the traps so that the owners can bring them in for spaying/neutering. By returning cats to their original locations, they can prevent new colonies of cats from forming. Hatch passed out information about the program. This approach does not immediately reduce the population, but is intended over time to reduce the number of free roaming cats. This will get those numbers down in the long run. This also allows us to provide vaccinations and better rabies protection over the long term.
- b. **Membership:** Several members were asked if they would serve second terms. Please let staff know. We are looking for applicants for two at-large positions and one for Cane Creek-Buckhorn VAD. Discussion followed. Staff asked members to think hard about folks they know who might be interested/eligible, for both types of position. Ranells suggested that staff could send a letter to all the VAD farmers in a given district to let them know we are looking for a new member from that district. Members endorsed that idea. Hughes has email addresses so staff will proceed to do this.

8. **Time for Information Sharing:** Ortosky reported that the Ag Economic Development grant program is recommended for funding at the \$100,000 level; next deadline for applications is June 30. McPherson and Ranells stated how much they had enjoyed serving on the APB as they retire off.

9. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.