

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board**  
**Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District**  
**49 Mount Carmel Road, Asheville, NC 28806 with optional Zoom**  
**June 21, 2022, at 11 am**

**Ag Advisory Board Members Present:** Terri Wells, Steve Duckett, Chase Hubbard, Ed Bulluck, and Alan Lang.

**Others Present:** Ariel Zijp and Avni Naik.

Meeting was called to order at 11:03 am by Terrie Wells.

**Approval of the June 21, 2022, Meeting Agenda**

- **Steve Duckett made a motion to approve the June 21, 2022, meeting agenda, seconded by Alan Lang, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**Approval of the April 19, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

- **Steve Duckett made a motion to approve the April 19, 2022, meeting minutes, seconded by Alan Lang, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**VAD and EVAD Applications:** Presented by Ms. Zijp and Ms. Naik. The VAD and EVAD updates will now be provided by the Soil and Water staff as the Planning Department has been working with consultants and the public on the Comprehensive Plan. The VAD/EVAD program has transitioned to Ag and Land Resources and Ms. Zijp and Ms. Naik will process applications and update the VAD/EVAD GIS layers and data.

Mr. Bulluck asked staff where Buncombe stands in relation to other counties with VAD/EVAD acreage; Ms. Zijp stated Buncombe is a leader in the program. Mr. Bulluck stated that a large acreage of land near Waynesville, NC that offers watershed protection is in their VAD program, and he was curious as to whether similar parcels in Buncombe are in the program. Ms. Zijp stated she was unsure and wasn't aware that parcels for watershed protection were eligible to be in the VAD program.

Ms. Wells noted that she was pleased to see Mr. Plemmons on the list as she had talked with him about some of the programs. Ms. Zijp stated he is interested in some of the cost-share programs offered and will now be eligible.

Applicant	Township	Address of Property	Acres	Program	Determination	Appl. Date	Phone Number	Appl. No.	Tax Lot PIN
Tranquility Cove LLC	Weaverville	45 Ivey Trails Rd Weaverville, NC 28787	57.11	VAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	5/16/2022	202-305-0243	639 - Tranquility Co	9735013237, 9735011967
Ronald D. Prestwood	Leicester	253, 251 Hogeeye Rd Leicester, NC 28748	111.88	VAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	5/16/2022	828-683-2149	640 - Ronald D Prestwood	8761970211, 8761963359, 8771074479,
SHILLINGSBURG PETER L, SHILLINGSBURG MIRIAM J	Ivy	520 Haw Branch Road	121.73	VAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	5/16/2022	828-208-2635	641- Peter Shillingsburg	9783180183
Edmon and Jean Allen LE	Ivy	601 North Fork Rd Barnardsville, NC 28709	28.22	VAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	5/16/2022	828-626-2203	642- Edmond and Jean Allen LE	9785770966
RANDALL W STACY TRUST RANDALL W STACY (TRUSTEE)	Leicester	1070 Ingle Mountain Rd Leicester, NC 28748	60.28	VAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	5/16/2022	828-208-2635	643- Randall Stacey	8781483944
Mitch Plemmons	Leicester	15 Wild Berry Lane, Leicester NC 28748	16.9	EVAD	Eligible-Awaiting Approval	6/9/2022	828-273-3968	Mitch Plemmons	8780037401

396.12

	VAD Totals		EVAD Totals		VAD/EVAD Combined Totals	
Totals as of May 2022	Number of Farms	295	Number of Farms	18	313	
	Total Acreage	21039.818	Total Acreage	2144.84	23184.658	
New totals for June 2022 (if proposed applications are approved)	Number of Farms	300	Number of Farms	19	319	
	Total Acreage	21419.038	Total Acreage	2161.74	23580.778	

- **Steve Duckett made a motion to approve the VAD/EVAD applications, seconded by Ed Bulluck, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**VAD/EVAD Ordinance Change – Presented by Ms. Zijp**

The ordinance change was brought to Commissioner briefing by county legal a month ago. Ms. Zijp stated she was unaware of the change before it was taken to the Commissioners, but they are now working on ensuring that such changes follow the right procedures in the future so that the Ag Advisory Board may know/review the changes before they are taken to the BOC. The change was made at the state level, and county legal was ensuring that Buncombe was adhering to the correct procedures and updating the ordinance as needed.

Ms. Zijp stated that the biggest change was that the VAD/EVAD nuisance suit protection buffer has been reduced from 1 mile to 0.5 mile. It also seemed as though some of the language surrounding bona fide farms was edited/updated. Board members requested that staff send out the ordinance change with that showed the edits/track changes so that they were able to note the differences in the new ordinance.

- **Chase Hubbard made a motion to approve the VAD/EVAD ordinance change, seconded by Ed Bulluck, and the motion passed on the vote.**

### **Proposed Ranking System Presentation**

Ms. Wells stated that the proposed ranking that was sent out for this meeting was slightly different from the prior meeting. Ms. Zijp confirmed. Staff had ranked all the properties on the list and noticed that small properties with a high percentage of prime soils ranked significantly higher than large properties with lower prime soils, and this did not fully reflect the program's priorities. This made staff re-evaluate their weighting to find a more balanced evaluation system that would reflect the program's priorities, which led to the edited ranking system that was sent out to the board.

Staff is preparing and organizing program procedures in case the public votes to approve the bond as the workload and funding may increase. A well-researched ranking system that utilizes public dollars for quality projects is important.

Ms. Zijp and Ms. Naik presented the differences between the current and proposed ranking systems to the board. The proposed ranking system utilizes the LESA framework – a system developed by the USDA-NRCS to help local governments standardize their farmland project rankings. Staff combined questions from the current ranking system; federal and state grants; and Northampton Farmland Preservation Program's ranking system to create a new ranking that is tailored to Buncombe's conservation goals. The proposed ranking system will allow properties that may not have high percentages of prime soils but have larger acreages or clustering potential to be ranked slightly higher than they were before. The development potential category was included in the ranking system to align with the state grant application's questions related to development pressure, however, it was weighted at the lowest percentage to ensure projects aren't skewed towards properties at the urban fringe.

- **Alan Lang made a motion to approve the proposed ranking system, seconded by Steve Duckett, and the motion passed on the vote.**

### **Announcements and Discussion**

Mr. Bulluck asked Ms. Zijp if the Sneddon conservation easement deed contains language/a clause that passes the duties of preservation and protection to the easement holder. Mr. Bulluck mentioned that there has been a case in the past where NCDOT intruded onto easement property, and the easement holder took over the legal action/negotiation against NCDOT. Ms. Zijp stated she was fairly certain there is language in every county-held easement deed stating that the County would protect the easement if intrusion were to occur, but she would check in with the attorney and provide Mr. Bulluck with the deed language. Currently, Mr. Snelson – a landowner with a county-held easement – has had intrusion from NCDOT, and a Buncombe County Attorney is representing Mr. Snelson.

**Farmland Preservation Report:** Ms. Zijp presented the farmland preservation report.

- **Easement Project Updates**
  - Clark and Berner easements – Letter of Intent signing, starting survey
  - Survey, Deed work, Appraisals and Baseline Visits complete
    - McCurry Easement – Closing scheduled for July 7th

- Rosseter Easement – Closing scheduled for July 7th
  - Sneddon Easement – Closing scheduled for July 7th
  - Harvey/O’Doherty Easement – Closing scheduled for August 4th
  - SAHC Teague Property Easement – Closing scheduled for Sept 12<sup>th</sup>
  - Splendor Valley LLC Easement –initial survey visits May 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Post-closing document wrap up –
  - Hart & Currie Easements – 5 Easements Closed on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022!
  - NCDCA and USDA post-closing checklists to request final 10% check completed
- Waiting on Grant Funding
  - Sluder Easement – NCDCA approved, waiting on USDA funds
  - Ramsey Easement – NCDCA approved, waiting on USDA funds
  - Anthony Cole Farm – awaiting notification from NCDCA
  - Gary Cole Farm– awaiting notification from NCDCA
  - Jasperwood Phase 1– awaiting notification from NCDCA
  - Jasperwood Phase 2 – awaiting notification from NCDCA
- **Commissioners Briefing and Meetings - 20% by 2030 conservation goal**
- **Monitoring Visits – March/April 2022 Completed**
- **NCDCA and USDA monitoring reports and progress/budget reports submitted**
- **Taking over VAD/EVAD coordination completely from Planning Department**

With no other announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 pm.