Meeting Minutes

Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District 49 Mount Carmel Road, Asheville, NC 28806 with optional Zoom July 28, 2022, at 1 pm

Ag Advisory Board Members Present: Bruce Snelson, Terri Wells, Steve Duckett, Chase Hubbard, and Anne Grier.

Others Present: Ariel Zijp and Avni Naik.

Meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Bruce Snelson.

Approval of the July 28, 2022, Meeting Agenda

> Terri Wells made a motion to approve the July 28, 2022, meeting agenda, seconded by Steve Duckett, and the motion passed on the vote.

Approval of the June 21, 2022, Meeting Minutes

> Terri Wells made a motion to approve the June 21, 2022, meeting minutes, seconded by Steve Duckett, and the motion passed on the vote.

Board Member Reports – None presented at this time.

<u>VAD and EVAD Applications</u>: Presented by Ms. Naik. One new EVAD application. Applicant Carole Currie is in the VAD program and is requesting for EVAD status as she recently closed on a conservation easement.

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Applicant	Township		Acres	Program	Determination	Appl. Date	Phone Number	Appl. No.
Carole & Walter Currie	Leicester	99999 S Turkey Creek Rd, Leicester NC 28748	39.04	EVAD	Eligible - Waiting Approval	6/24/2022	828-216-3201	645-Carole & Walter Currie
			39.04					
			VAD Totals		EVAD Totals		/EVAD Combined Totals	
		Totals as of June 2022	Number of Farms	300	Number of Farms	19	319	
			Total Acreage	21419.04	Total Acreage	2161.74	23580.78	
		New totals for July 2022 (if proposed	Number of Farms	299	Number of Farms	20	319	
		applications are approved)	Total Acreage		Total Acreage	2204.08	23580.78	
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> Terri Wells made a motion to approve the EVAD application(s), seconded by Steve Duckett, and the motion passed on the vote.

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

- Easement Purchase Criteria Process for LCAB And AAB
- LCAB mapping update and ranking update process
- Prepping New Projects for fiscal year 2023
- Upcoming Trainings CET, Land Trust Alliance Training, Farmland Succession Coordinator Certification
 Training
- Easement Project Updates
 - Survey & Deed work
 - Clark Easement –Survey work
 - o Berner Easement –Survey Work

- Harvey/O'Doherty Easement deed work, Appraisal, closing scheduled for 8/4
- SAHC Teague Property Easement finished survey, SAHC Baseline, Closing 9/12
- Splendor Valley LLC Easement –survey in review, deed work, baseline/maps
- Closing Easements
 - o Rosseter Easement Closed easement July 8th
 - o McCurry Easement Closed easement July 18th
 - Sneddon Easement Closed easement July 18th
- Waiting on Grant Funding -
 - Sluder Easement NCDA approved, waiting on USDA funds
 - o Ramsey Easement NCDA approved, final stages of USDA approval
 - Anthony Cole Farm 38.2 acres Grant funds awarded \$172,500
 - o Gary Cole Farm 28.9 acres- Grant funds awarded \$129,000
 - Jasperwood Phase 1 113 acres a Grant funds awarded \$440,778.80
 - Jasperwood Phase 2 98 acres Grant funds awarded \$376,171.91

Upcoming Projects: Presented by Ms. Zijp. Potential projects for FY23 requiring approval by the Board are summarized below:

- 1. William Scott Fisher 69 acres
 - a. Forested tract
 - b. Family farm
 - c. 50% prime soils w/ significant development pressure
 - d. Transaction costs from county, not eligible for USDA funds, eligible for NCDA
- 2. Will Harlan & Emily Diznoff 50 acres
 - a. Adjacent to Pisgah National Forest on 3 sides
 - b. Forested tract w/ some crop production
 - c. Transaction costs from county, not eligible for USDA, eligible for NCDA
- 3. Rogers Family Farm 2 tracts
 - a. Rogers Family Trust 155 acres
 - i. Joint ownership amongst siblings
 - ii. Pasture & cropland, century family farm
 - iii. Transaction costs from county, not eligible for USDA, eligible for NCDA
 - b. David Rogers 22.9 acres
 - i. Pasture and cropland, century family farm
 - ii. Transaction costs from county, not eligible for USDA, potential for NCDA
- 4. Russ Roberson 58 acres
 - a. Pasture and hay, century family farm
 - b. 100% prime soils, significant development pressure
 - c. Transaction costs from county, eligible for both USDA and NCDA funds
- 5. SAHC Garrett Cove 101 acres
 - a. Forested w/ wildlife habitat
 - b. SAHC-owned, full donation easement w/ transaction costs from county
- 6. Mary Ann Brigman 42.2 acres
 - a. Forested, applying for Century Family Farm
 - b. Significant development pressure
 - c. Transaction costs from county, not eligible for USDA, NCDA application cap reached

Staff will coordinate site visits with Board members and landowners prior to the August meeting, where the Board will vote on whether to proceed with each project and which ones would be better suited for state funding.

Easement Purchase Criteria Discussion: Presented by Ms. Zijp. With the potential of the land conservation bond passing, Ms. Zijp wanted to walk the Board through the current project selection/application process and how this may be affected by additional funding. As of now, the county only funds transaction costs, but if the county begins easement purchase, a clear selection criteria and justification is necessary. Ms. Zijp presented some options that could be used to determine easement purchase eligibility and suggested that a project meeting 1 or more of those options could be eligible. The Board discussed what the criteria would be and felt that meeting 2 or more of the options would be stronger when justifying easement purchase funds. Mr. Duckett and Ms. Wells also discussed a criterion regarding lack of other funding availability and stated they were not fully comfortable with considering that as a criterion to determine funding eligibility. Ms. Zijp agreed and stated staff is open to any other criteria that the Board may think of adding in. There was discussion surrounding open space as a criterion if the property is not under ag use or have significant prime soils, but the Board generally agreed that may be a criterion for LCAB to consider as their priorities/purposes align with that better. Ms. Wells stated that with the Comp Plan underway, considering urban vs. rural settings and where dense development makes more sense vs. where conservation should occur may be considered during project selection.

There was also discussion surrounding the percentage of compensation to provide landowners with. Ms. Zijp stated that landowners are already donating 25% of the easement's value, so compensating between 50-75% is ideal – particularly for farmers that often depend on this compensation for retirement and/or subsistence. State grants generally compensate 25-50%, while federal grants compensate 50%; however, federal programs have much stricter requirements surrounding prime soils that are harder to meet due to the mountainous terrain. Federal grants are also more competitive.

The Board agreed that breaking up AAB and LCAB's processes would make it easier to understand/differentiate their roles and criteria surrounding easement purchase. The Board agreed to continue thinking about the processes and criteria and return with input for the next meeting.

Announcements and Discussion

With no other announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.