

Meeting Minutes
Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board - Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District
49 Mount Carmel Road, Asheville, NC 28806 with optional Zoom
November 15, 2022, at 11 am

Ag Advisory Board Members Present: Chair Steve Duckett, Vice-Chair Bruce Snelson, Ed Bulluck, Terri Wells, Chase Hubbard, and David Lee.

Others Present: Ariel Zijp and Avni Naik.

Meeting was called to order at 11:04 am by Chair Steve Duckett.

Approval of the November 15, 2022, Meeting Agenda

- **David Lee made a motion to approve the November 15, 2022, meeting agenda, seconded by Chase Hubbard, and the motion passed on the vote.**

Approval of the October 18, 2022, Meeting Minutes

- **Bruce Snelson made a motion to approve the October 18, 2022, meeting minutes, seconded by Chase Hubbard, and the motion passed on the vote.**

Easement Purchase Criteria Flowchart: Ms. Zijp presented the easement purchase criteria flowchart. The Open Space bond recently passed, and County Management and Commissioners want to increase transparency around the conservation boards and program. The AAB discussed the flowchart during prior meetings and there have been no new or significant changes since the last discussions, but Management has requested the flowchart be shown to Commissioners in December after the Board approves it.

Ms. Zijp briefly talked through the flowchart. She explained that bond funds would be considered once all other funding options have been explored and projects would still have to go through the project ranking criteria first (which was approved during Summer 2022). A project would only be considered for bond funds if two criteria from the list are met. Ms. Wells asked if staff would be presenting the project ranking sheet as well as easement purchase flowchart at the Commissioners meeting – Ms. Zijp stated they would. Mr. Lee stated that the staff and the board will need to be clear to landowners about how their projects would best be funded and that not all projects will be funded through bonds; some would be grant-funded, which may take more time due to the application process. This would be important as stewards of the bond funds and to ensure transparency and unbiased decisions around funding.

Ms. Wells stated that it would be better to update the language on the flowchart to read “Up to 50%” of the easement’s value to avoid setting up the expectation that compensation would always be at that percentage. Ms. Zijp asked who the decision-makers would be when it comes down to percentage of easement value. Ms. Wells stated that the board would help set some of those decisions; if for example there was a landowner that was donating a significant % of the value, the board could prioritize that project due to the donation value. Mr. Bulluck stated that it is important that staff and the Board is able to justify the ranking system. He also asked if land trusts in the county would have access to the bond money. Ms. Zijp stated they would through the Land Conservation Advisory Board, which also has their own ranking and project evaluation system. Ms. Wells asked if the bond money would only be used for easement purchase or also for transaction costs. Ms. Zijp stated that she was unsure as that had not yet been determined. For that question, it would also be important to consider the timeline for projects as the bond money has to be spent over a certain number of years, whereas the annual budget allocation can be rolled over.

Mr. Duckett noted an edit to the easement purchase criteria: He recommended deleting a sentence that was pertinent to LCAB and land trusts that had access to private funding that AAB does not. Ms. Wells also recommended specifying that the landowner charitable donation will be leveraged.

- **Chase Hubbard made a motion to approve the Easement Purchase Criteria flowchart, seconded by David Lee, and the motion passed on the vote.**

Board Member Reports: No board member reports.

VAD and EVAD Applications: No new VAD or EVAD applications for this month.

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

- **Farmland Succession Coordinator Training – Nov 7-9**
- **Easement Project Updates**
 - New Projects for AAB board approval
 - Grant Fund Applications
 - NCDCA- due Dec 15th - Scott Fisher, Will Harlan, Roger’s Family Farm part 1: Roger’s Family Trust, Roger’s Family Farm part 2: David Rogers
 - USDA - due Nov 18th– Russ Roberson
 - Cons plans, forest management plans, signed authorization documents, maps, land use decisions, project budgets, etc.
 - Survey in progress
 - Sluder Easement 90 acres
 - Ramsey Easement 40 acres
 - Anthony Cole Farm 38.2 acres
 - Gary Cole Farm 28.9 acres
 - Jasperwood Phase 1 - 113 acres
 - Jasperwood Phase 2 - 98 acres
- Final Stages of Due Diligence
 - Clark Easement – deed work and appraisal
 - Berner Easement – deed work and appraisal
 - SAHC Teague Property Easement – closing November 21st
 - Splendor Valley LLC Easement – title commitment and appraisal
- Arc GIS Story Map – Land Conservation in Buncombe County
- Easement Purchase Flow Chart

Mr. Bulluck asked if the County gets competitive bids for surveyors or appraisers. Ms. Zijp stated that the only competitive bid set up is for surveyors, but appraisals don’t need competitive bids. Staff has hired the current appraiser based on his experience with easement-related appraisals as there are only two appraisers that deal with easements, and the costs and quality of his services. Other land trusts in the county also use the same appraiser for their work.

Announcements and Discussion: Ms. Wells stated that staff will be going to the Commissioners meeting later that day for the 3 donation easements that were brought to the board during the October meeting.

With no other announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 11:46 pm.