

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 4 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: July 18, 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

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
John Lyttle – Cooperative Extension
Celeste Burns – Open Space & Real Estate
Magnolia Long – Foothills Regional Council

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, July 18, 2024 in a hybrid format. This meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by the Chair, Nicole Connelly.

1. **Approval of March Board Minutes** – Nicole Connelly requested approval of the March meeting minutes submitted. Motion was made by Kenny Browning and seconded by Talmage Layton. Nicole called for vote; motion passed.
2. Guest recognized and offered the floor. Magnolia Long, Senior Planner/RPO Director of Foothills Regional Commission, joined the meeting to get a feel of the FPAB's roll with Durham Agriculture. Magnolia is part of a team that has been contracted to revise the 2009 Durham Farmland Protection Plan.
3. **Easements/Open Space Update** – Celeste Burns reported that two easements have been secured for Clara Glenn and Bill Sparrow, Jr. Confirmation has not been received for Neil Frank property.

An opportunity has been made possible for Durham County to become a certified entity for USDA-NRCS under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easement Program (ACEP-ALE). This invitation is due to Durham County staff's leading role in preserving agricultural lands through this program. Kenny Browning made a motion to show support in the acceptance of this role as a certified entity. Mark Waller seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed. Letter of support written to BOCC and signed by Nicole Connelly.

4. **Financial Report** – Lisa Marochak reported that Durham County budget cuts reduced the FPAB 2025 budget by 10%. The 2024 budget and expenditures are summarized in the 2024 Annual Report which was shared prior to and at the meeting.

Lisa Marochak reminded the Board that every year, funds are preapproved to be available for necessary material purchases for VAD signage. Mark Waller made a motion to approve \$500 to be made available for VAD expenses; Kenny Browning seconded. Chair requested a vote. Motion passed.

5. **VAD Update** – Sherry Scully presented a VAD applications for approval:

- Elizabeth Boardley – 27.43 ac on Red Mill Rd
- Neil and Catherine Frank – 330 acres on Moores Mill Rd Rd (renewal)

Mark Waller motioned to approve the VAD applications. Kenny Browning seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed. (Neil Frank abstained from this vote.)

6. **Annual Report** – Paper and digital copies of report provided to Board. Nicole Connelly and Sherry Scully discussed the year in review. Program goals and funding requests were discussed in detail. Mark Waller made a motion to adopt the annual report. This motion was seconded by Kenny Browning. All in favor; motion passed.
7. **Ag Economic Development Grant Update** – Sherry Scully reported that the BOCC approved FY 2025 budget of \$250,000 for this program. An online application form has been created with assistance from Durham County’s IS&T department. Application period is open with deadline of August 23rd. Annual training session had a lot of interest this year: 41 registrants and 27 attendees.
8. **Cooperative Extension Update** – John Lyttle provided update on Farm Campus Feasibility Study. A Farm Campus website will be released soon that will include Results of Community Engagement Report.

Upcoming events scheduled

- 8/13 – Poultry processing training at Bull City Farm
- 8/14; 3-6pm – Kid Ag Demonstration
- 8/20 – “Seasonal Maintenance of Cool Weather Crops” webinar with CEFS
- 9/11 - Wake County pesticide certification training
- 9/26 – Tri County Pasture Field Day

New Business

1. Farmland Board members Nancy Herndon and Shakira Campbell have resigned from the board. These members will both be missed. Nancy Herndon is the Cape Fear watershed representative, appointed by the BOCC. Shakira Campbell serves as the DOST representative. Sherry Scully will email Nicole and Lisa a list of VAD participants in the Cape Fear Watershed who may be interested in representing that area. Sherry has reached out to Carl Kolosna, staff liaison for DOST to have someone appointed from their board.
2. Talmage Layton shared an update concerning the Stormwater Fees imposed on agricultural land. He has spoken with NC legislators over the past few months and subsequently a bill was written and passed with 100% support by both the House of Legislators and the Senate that Bonafide farms will be exempt from any stormwater fees in NC. More here: [Email: Information: Legislative Bulletin, June 7, 2024 - Dynamics 365 \(ncilm.org\)](#)

Next Meeting – August 15 at 6:00pm at the Durham Farm Bureau office or online.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Chair Connelly adjourned the meeting at 7:15pm.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

September 19, 2024
Date approved