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2017.wav AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD



415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC

TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

AGENDA

6:00 PM, MONDAY, July 10, 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. May 22, 2017
3. **Continued Discussion on Creating a Letter of Support to FARM Center**
[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Discussion & Consideration by the Board
4. **Continued Discussion on Creating an AAB Mission Statement, AAB Proclamation, and potential AAB Partnerships (including creation of an event survey)**
[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]
 - a. Staff Comments
 - b. Discussion & Consideration by Commission
5. **Old Business** *[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]*
6. **New Business** *[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]*
7. **Board Correspondence with Outside Agencies**
[to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up for discussion, if required]
8. **Adjourn**

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MINUTES SPECIAL HEARING

6:00 PM, MONDAY, MAY 22, 2017
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

Members Present: Mr. Marshall
Mr. Land
Mr. Blanton
Mr. Hollifield
Ms. Sewell
Ms. Willoughby

Staff Present: Gregory Gordos, Senior Planner – Community Development

Media Present: none.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Marshall called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Discussion of Creating a Letter of Support to FARM Center

Mr. Blanton introduced the matter before the board and stated that a special meeting was scheduled in order to finalize the letter's content and approve that content as a Board, in order to speak on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Sewell recommended adding the following statement to the letter of support: "we recommend Oconee County Council approve the ground lease agreement found in Ordinance 2017-12". Discussion on the precise wording took place. Consensus was reached amongst the Board and Mr. Blanton agreed to place the statement in the first paragraph of the second page. Discussion followed on the Second Reading of Ordinance 2017-12 that took place on 5/16/2017.

Ms. Sewell recommended that the first paragraph on the second page be moved to the final paragraph of the second page. Consensus was reached and Mr. Blanton agreed to move the paragraph.

Mr. Blanton made a motion to recommend to County Council the letter of support as amended. Ms. Willoughby seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.

3. Old Business

Mr. Blanton introduced a revised mission statement draft for consideration by the Board. He stated the draft could be reviewed at home for consideration and a vote at the next regularly scheduled hearing. Discussion on slogans promoting Oconee County agriculture followed.

The Board thanked Mr. Blanton for his hard work on each draft document to date.

4. New Business

Ms. Sewell noted two items mentioned at the Oconee County Council meeting on 5/16/2017 that may be of relevance to the Agricultural Advisory Board. Council consideration of a “pet tax” and dead armadillos were mentioned. Discussion followed on both topics. No action was taken.

5. Board Correspondence with Outside Agencies

None presented.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Blanton motioned to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:47 PM.

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May 16, 2017

Oconee County Council
Re. FARM Center

Dear Madam Chair,

We are very grateful that, through the diligent efforts of many, Oconee County has established an Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB). We have met several times independently and with members of the Heritage Fair Committee (HFC), as well as other community leaders.

The consensus is to prioritize the Heritage Fair, as expeditiously as possible, as a step in the direction of the permanent establishment of an Agricultural Center. We believe such a center will benefit not only agriculture, but the entire community, and in turn, the Upstate altogether. The August 2016 feasibility study reflects this, and there are numerous examples within a few hundred miles of Oconee of very successful centers that we can see and touch that prove their immense value, and from which ours can be modeled.

We realize that the raising of funds for this is a critical challenge. We do not believe it incumbent on one person or one group to shoulder the entire load. There are many potential cooperators in our area that, with the formation of strong partnerships, with the writing of grants, and with the income a center will soon generate, will prove such an undertaking well worth the considerable effort it will take. We, the AAB and the HFC believe and recommend the time to act is now. The HFC would like to host this year's fair at the new, permanent site.

We understand there has been some progress on the DOT review and our request for approval for the entry way. In a recent meeting it was discussed that perhaps a modified, scaled-down entryway, with one entrance instead of two, (with smaller signage), use of recycled (ground) asphalt, and a tweaking of engineering and sight plans that it is possible to build the initial entryway for approximately \$100,000 instead of the original, full-blown \$400,000.

It was mentioned that the entrance for the new Walhalla Zaxby's cost about \$78,000, and that it was paid for using C funds. It was also brought out that one of the DOT's estimates of vehicular traffic along Highway 123 was slightly in error, which perhaps caused an error in the cost estimate. A couple of the parameters were reversed, incorrectly reflecting 78,000 cars per time period measured, when it should have been 78,000 people in that period, or about 10,000 vehicles.

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In consideration of these recent developments the AAB recommends Oconee County Council move as quickly as possible in two key areas. First, to establish a contract between the County and the FARM Center to operate the Agricultural Center, and for the development of the property on Sandifer Boulevard. A specific and focused contract is best for all groups concerned. A long-term agreement is necessary for securing most grants. Second, to establish a modified, streamlined entryway in a timeframe consistent with preparations for this fall's fair.

Agriculture is the oldest and the most profitable industry in Oconee County. With all our assets, it has the potential to grow exponentially. We encourage Council to review the following websites, and if you wish, we will be happy to arrange visits to several of these successful, not-too-distant agricultural centers.

People have asked why fish from our lakes have to be weighed in Greenville, when the Bassmasters overnight, eat, and fish in this county. Likewise last year: it was from Hartwell to Greenville. If we had an appropriate area they would come here. Their affiliated sponsors, dealers, suppliers, etc. would enjoy hosting their boat, R.V., and equipment shows here, had we adequate facilities.

People wonder why their children cannot graduate High School in the county in which they attended, and furthermore they ask how much it costs to rent Littlejohn Coliseum. T.Ed Garrison has requested \$10,000,000 in the upcoming budget for the addition of another building. Anderson County is establishing an agricultural center, and our cattlemen have already committed to show there. Now is ***the*** time for Oconee to take the lead in establishing a permanent facility that will benefit not just farmers, but the entire community.

Respectfully yours,

Michael Marshall, Chair

Agricultural Advisory Board

<http://www.ncagfairs.org>

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<http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/fairs/NorthCarolinaAgriculturalFairs.htm>

<http://www.wncagcenter.org>

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