

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



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MINUTES SPECIAL HEARING

6:00 PM, MONDAY, July 10, 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

OCONEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX

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

Staff Present: Adam Chapman, Planner – Community Development

Media Present: none.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Land called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes from 5/22

Motion made by Mr. Land, seconded by Mr. Hollifield. Voted and unanimously approved the minutes.

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

Mr. Land and Mrs. Sewell were wanting to know if the letter, created to support the FARM Center had been read at the last County Council meeting. Staff was instructed to find out this information as soon as possible. Mrs. Sewell noted that the reading of the ordinance to lease the property for the FARM center had passed and they were waiting on a site plan. Staff informed the Board that a meeting was set for July 25th with the FARM Center's property developer to do a pre-application review. Funds for creating a main entrance off of US HWY 123 had been secured for the FARM Center site. A conversation ensued about the chance of the Heritage Fair being held at the new site and it appears, through conversation, that the Heritage Fair would be held at the same site it had been held in 2016.

4. Continued Discussion on Creating an AAB Mission Statement, AAB Proclamation, and potential AAB Partnerships (including creation of an event survey)

Mr. Rex presented an updated version of the Boards draft Mission Statement (see attached). This mission statement came directly from the County Council's bullet points. Mr. Lands pointed out that as the Board sends ideas, notices and plans to County Council, that County Council, in return should send ideas, notices and plans to the Board. Mr. Howard suggested that whatever document is created that it be flexible to encompass new ideas in the future and be able to change without undue burden. Motion was made to send the Draft Mission Statement to Council by Mr. Howard, seconded by Mrs. Willaby and unanimously approved.

A further discussion on possible slogans for agriculture in the county vacillated between "Grow Oconee" or "Oconee Grown". No vote was taken at adopting either slogan as an official representation of Oconee County agriculture.

A discussion regarding the importance of knowing the current status of agriculture in the county was brought up by Mr. Land. What data is being collected at the Farmers market? Mrs. Sewell stated that several attempts to collect patronage numbers have been tried with varying degree of success. An estimated attendance of 400-500 attendees and 10-15 vendors is the estimate attendance at the farmer's market. Mrs. Sewell noted that the "Likes" on the farmer's market Facebook page had grown by 600 in July from 1,400 in June. It was agreed upon by the Board that the major benefit for the farmer's market was the marketing aspects and that everyone had to encourage as many farmers' to attend the market, as vendors, as possible. It was asked if the county had any hardware for doing vehicle counts and Staff offered to find out by next weekend. Mrs. Kim noted that she had numbers for the Heritage Fair attendance but had to analyze before distributing them. Mrs. Willoughby noted that on the July 4th market, which was held later in the day to catch the firework attendees, allowed for new people to attend the market.

Mr. Land noted the importance of filling out the yearly agricultural census and the importance of encouraging all farmers in the county to fill out the census as well. He noted that Oconee County peach crops are ineligible for insurance as there is not enough historical data for the insurers to create a policy for the peach crop.

Mr. Rex provided a list of partnership opportunities (see attached) and it was discussed that once a solid partnership letter had been drafted and approved the various AAB members would sign up to reach out to the various groups. Mr. Land noted that the AAB would provide as much networking and backup support as the potential partnership groups needed but they, the partnership groups, would have to take the lead.

4. New Business

Mr. Hollifield noted that a letter from the farm bureau expressing the ramifications of the new sewer line running from Seneca to the new industrial park may have on agriculture in the county.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Land motioned to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.