



# OCONEE COUNTY

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## AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

### MINUTES

Farmer & Rancher Listening Session II  
Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

#### Members Present:

Rex Blanton, Chairman  
Ed Land, Vice Chair  
Debbie Sewell  
Kim Alexander  
Dr. Sandra Gray  
Vickie Willoughby  
Doug Hollifield

#### Staff Present:

Adam Chapman, Staff Liaison

#### Media Present:

Upstate Today

#### Ag & Art:

Les Walden , representing Lake Hartwell Country, and, Charlotte Waters, representing Visit Oconee. They spoke on "Ag & Art" whereby artist are paired with farms to create a temporary attraction. The Ag & Art event held in 2018 in Oconee County went better then they hope for. Mrs. Waters hopes to expand this event for 2019 and having up to 10 farms.

#### Farmer & Rancher Listening Session:

Mr. Blanton brought the meeting to order at 6:30. Mr. Blanton welcomed the audience to the session. Mr. Blanton then gave several reasons as to why this listening session is happening, such as engaging the agricultural community, having farmer input in to the comprehensive plan and making sure agriculture stays on the forefront of everyone's mind when making county wide decisions. Mr. Blanton went on to explain what the comprehensive plan is, what has been done since the last listening session, and how this night's meeting will work. Mr. Blanton then began the session by calling Mr. Dan Nerding to speak.

Mr. Nerding spoke as a farmer who specializes in aquaculture/aquaponics and the need for the government to recognize that farms can occur in small areas, land wise. His

issues stem from the lack of buyers for small scale fisheries providers. An outlet for his product is what he is missing.

Mrs. May Leinhart, spoke on behalf of Upstate Forever. Mrs. Leinhart spoke about the process and the benefits of the creation of agricultural conservation easements. Mrs. Leinhart noted that land can be preserved as farmland in-perpetuity with a conservation easement.

Mrs. Gwen McPhail, spoke on behalf of herself. Mrs. McPhail noted that land is in demand and that linking land holders with future and young farmers is a key element. Mrs. McPhail thanked the AAB for its work on getting agriculture in the comprehensive plan. Mrs. McPhail noted that Young Farmers started the current Heritage Fair in the county.

Dr. Lance Beecher, spoke on behalf of himself. Dr. Beecher noted that he works with several farmers in Oconee County for aquaculture. The vegetable part of aquaponics is the easy part, the fish part is difficult. Reaching the economy of scale necessary regarding fish for processing, is difficult. Dr. Beecher noted a system for veterans to get involved in agriculture including aquaponics.

Lee Keese, spoke on behalf of the Farm Bureau. Mr. Keese noted that the Farm Bureau provides outreach and advocacy for farmers in the area. The Farm Bureau also is involved in conservation easements. Mr. Keese is also a member of Cattleman's association.

Karrin Patterson, spoke on behalf of FFA West-Oak. All FFA chapters affiliated with Young Farmers association. One goal is to get the young farmers up and coming association. Ms. Patterson invited any farmer to come and join as well.

Ken Martin, spoke on behalf of Field-dale Farms. Mr. Martin noted he has been involved in many different jurisdictions in their writing of agriculture laws. He noted Franklin County, Georgia has almost 1000 chicken houses. The chicken house ordinances, in Franklin County, apply the setbacks on both the chicken house as well as the adjacent landowners.

The remainder of the meeting was an interactive conversation and workshop to gain insight from the attendees.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned 8:03