

Agricultural Advisory Board Agenda

December 11, 2023

1. Call to order
2. Moment of silence
3. Invocation
4. Pledge of allegiance
5. Approval of minutes
November 13, 2023
6. Public discussion session *[3 minutes per person]*
7. Discussion [to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up in discussion if required]
 - **Mr. Jamie Gilbert Oconee Economic Alliance**
8. Discussion [to include Vote and/or Action on matters brought up in discussion if required]
 - **Dr. Adam Kantrovich-** *Extension Specialist, Agribusiness Asst. Director of Clemson Extension Agribusiness Team Clemson University, to attend in January*
 - **Year in review** - *Ms. Alexander*
 - **Calendar for 2024 Meetings-** *Ms. Alexander*
9. Adjourn



Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board

When & Where

6:00 PM

December 11, 2023

Council Chambers

415 S Pine St

Walhalla SC 29691

Staff contact

846-638-4218

planninginfo@oconeesc.com

BOARD MEMBERS

Kim Alexander, Chairman, District I

Rex Blanton, District III

Charlie Whiten, District V

Tessa Moxley, Secretary, At-Large

Trent Smith, District II

Nathaniel Duncan, District IV

Joshua Owens, At-Large

Chris Talley, Ex-Officio

Minutes

6:00 PM, Monday, November 13, 2023

Tamassee DAR School

Members Present

Charlie Whiten

Tessa Moxley

Kim Alexander

Josh Owens

Rex Blanton

Staff Present

James Coley

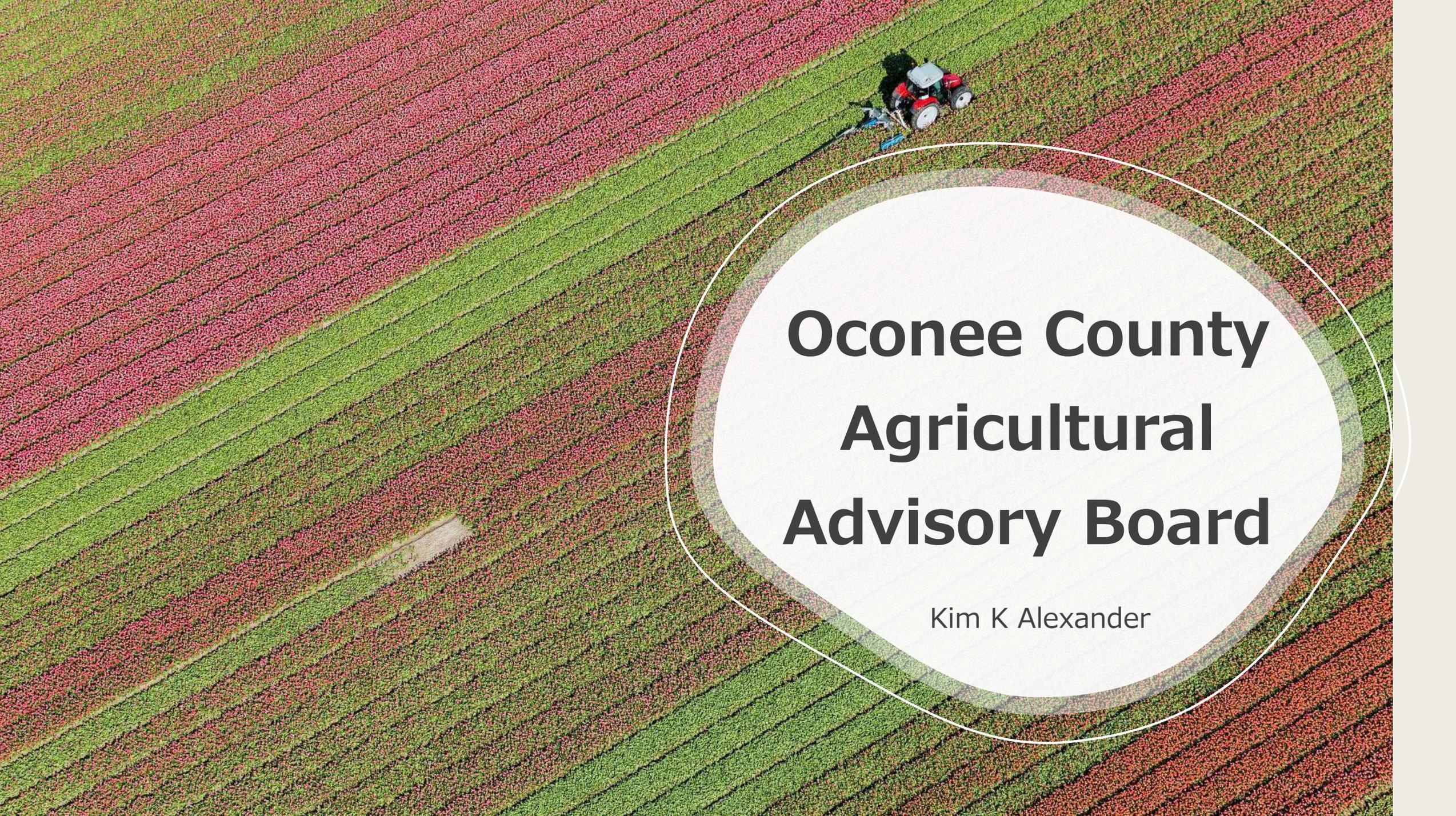
Media Present

None

1. **Call to order-** Ms. Alexander called the November 13 meeting to order at 6:01pm
2. **Moment of silence**
3. **Invocation**
4. **Pledge of allegiance**
5. **Approval of minutes-** November 6, 2023. Mr. Whiten made a motion to approve the minutes seconded by Mr. Owens and approved 5/0.
6. **Announcements:**
 - **Mission goals and vision.**
 - **Members of the board and contact information.**
 - **Partner organizations.**
 - **Citizen initiated zoning.**
7. History of the Golden Corner Industrial Park and discussion about ramifications of Sewer South infrastructure
 - Jamie Gilbert is on our December agenda to discuss possible industry recruitments that will support Oconee County Agriculture.
8. **Public discussion Session** *[3 minutes per person] If you are not able to attend in person and you have a comment, you may submit it by contacting the Planning Department at planninginfo@oconeesc.com or 864-638-4218, so that we may receive your comment and read it into the record.*
 - Discussion ensued about the state of logging in the county, and the decline in industry since the mid-1990s. Concerns were expressed about the over-importation of goods that are driving the prices down of domestically produced materials.
 - Energy generators that burn pulp wood/pellets to produce electricity, thus supporting the timber industry and creating energy.
 - i. Ms. Alexander-made phone calls to Blue Ridge Electric about the

possibility, but was told that we are not de-regulated, therefore cannot start this industry.

- ii. According to the Canton Mill, a “Wood Basket” is a 200-mile radius.
 - Ms. Alexander: Cargill could be a potentially good industry to recruit since Oconee County is number one in the state for poultry.
 - The price of land in Oconee County has gotten too high to afford to farm.
 - Sentiments were expressed that next to poultry, logging is one of the most disliked and misunderstood industries; folks are not educated in how it works. Discussion ensued about the importance of education for the public, so that they vote to support their interests. Trees are a renewable resource.
 - The lack of a pulp mill is going to severely impact the timber industry.
- 9. Adjourn:** Mr. Whiten made a motion to adjourn at 7:19pm, seconded by Mr. Blanton and approved 5/0.



Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board

Kim K Alexander

Mission

The mission of the Oconee County Agricultural Advisory Board is to aid and advise the county on all matters related to agriculture in order to ensure that the diverse agricultural interests in the county are supported and developed, that communication and cooperation among the varied agricultural concerns in the county are fostered, and that agriculture's vital role in the economy and character of the county is both maintained and developed.

(Ord. No. 2016-17, § 1, 6-21-2016)



OCONEE COUNTY TASK FORCE ON AGRICULTURE REPORT

Purpose and Need

Oconee County's mission includes protecting "communities, heritage, environment, and natural resources in an ever-changing world" —a goal that has become increasingly difficult to accomplish in the past three decades.

Farmland is being converted into non-farm uses at an alarming rate. According to recent census data, Oconee County's farmland has declined approximately 20% from 2002 to 2017.

The Report: Acknowledge agriculture is important to the economy and quality of life in Oconee County

- Recognize farmland is in decline
- Identify solutions to support farming and food producers

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Revisit Comp Plan strategies
- Invest in farmland protection
- Increase farmland zoning options and farmers incentives
- Hire an additional Oconee Soil and Water District employee

These All require County Council, not AAB Action.



Action Step

The Oconee Agriculture Advisory Board will work closely with county planning staff to review the strategies in the Agriculture Element of the Comprehensive Plan and will issue a brief report to Council on progress to date.

Ag presented to the planning commission and discussed options. The board did not approve the Ag 2 zoning proposal .



Action Step

The Oconee Agriculture
Advisory Board will take
steps to create the framework
and ordinance for a Voluntary
Agriculture District in
Oconee

**This presentation was given to us
by Issac in November 2023**





District Meetings

Taking the meetings to the people



District Five

OUTCOMES

- **Would like to have an agriculture-based business in the Golden Corner Commerce Park on Hwy 59.**
- **Examples residents gave were Poultry Processing, Feed Mill, Grain Bins, etc. Save to OneDrive, to get to your presentations from your computer, tablet, or phone.**
- **The residents would like for the Agriculture Advisory Board to present to the council to keep them informed of the needs of the farming community.**

THE FARM CENTER

DISTRICT THREE

OUTCOMES

- Partnerships with schools and farmers to support local students in the FFA program.
- The funding for the FARM Center to be fully funded.



District Four

OUTCOMES

- The July meeting was held in District four at the Madison Community Center.
- The same concerns were heard at this meeting along with the concern for many in the Lumber business; from the tree farmer to the loggers to the owner operator of the wood yard and the sawmills.
- 1. The need for a lumber market in Oconee County
- 2. The closure of the Canton Paper Mill is hurting the timber industry in Oconee County.
- mill.
- 3. Need help from the Oconee Economic Alliance to bring lumber industry to the county or within a range of 50 miles to help the local logger. Example Greenwood SC has a pellet



MOUNTAIN REST CAFÉ

District Two

OUTCOMES

- The September meeting was held in District Two at the Mountain Rest Post Office. This meeting had the same issues and concerns voiced.
- The request was made for the Agriculture Advisory Board to ask the County Council to help facilitate Oconee Economic Alliance in finding industry to recruit to Oconee County for the Agriculture community.
 - a. Rail site in the Seneca Industrial park for Grain Storage and Feed Mill
 - b. Wood market to sell products. Pellet mill, Chip mill, Wood yard, Etc.
 - c. USDA processor for Beef and other meats.
 - d. Fully Fund and Build an Agriculture Center.





District One

OUTCOMES

- The Same issues from all the other districts were echoed in District One.
- The logging industry was represented well along with the cattle industry and other farming sectors in District One.
- The residents would like for the County to seek industry to support them for the USDA processing, canning and grain storage.
- The timber industry is concerned that once this crop is harvested, there will not be any more timber planted.
- Land in District one is being developed and taken out of farming. This is a major concern.
- Farmers/ Ranchers can not afford to pay the 20,000 -30,000 per acre to farm or for pasture.



Summary

Across the county, the issues are the same.

Moving forward, Ag Advisory needs a plan for the following in 2024

Partnership with Relators/landowners/ developers- an official notification that you purchased next to an animal or plant-based operation.



Summary

Education:

This is one goal we should set for this board for several reasons.

1. As leaders, we must initiate education in the K-5 grade, Middle and High School 4H programs, and Ag in the Classroom. Both programs are great. Clemson Extension and Farm Bureau have these programs and a partnership with them is crucial in the education piece for our county.

Thank You

Kim K Alexander

**Agricultural Advisory Board
Chair**

District One Representative



AAB	
Date	Makeup Date
1/8/2024	
2/12/2024	
3/11/2024	
4/8/2024	
5/13/2024	
6/10/2024	
7/8/2024	
8/12/2024	
9/9/2024	
10/14/2024	
11/11/2024	11/14/2024
12/9/2024	

Holiday