

Minutes

6:00 PM, Monday, May 8, 2023

FARM CENTER

Members Present

Joshua Owens

Charlie Whiten

Rex Blanton

Tessa Moxley

Kim Alexander

Trent Smith

Chris Talley

Staff Present

James Coley

Media Present

None

1. **Call to order-** Ms. Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.
2. **Moment of silence**
3. **Invocation**
4. **Pledge of allegiance**
5. **Approval of minutes-** April 10, 2023. Mr. Blanton made a motion to approve the minutes seconded by Mr. Whiten and approved 6/0.
6. **Presentations**
 - **Mission goals and vision**
 - **Members of the board and contact information**
 - **Partner organizations**
 - i. Julian Davis and Mr. Hart, County Council Representatives are present
 - **Citizen initiated zoning**
7. **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*
 - FFA from Seneca High School: Mariah Swaggert, Alonzo McDonald-Ag teachers
 - i. Ag program at seneca is 13 years old
 - ii. 35x65 foot greenhouse.
 - iii. Fundraise via plant sale. To be able to travel and take part in FFA activities, there is a need for more funding.

- iv. Ava nimmons-facebook page, events (ag days at the fair, elementary school events, canned food drives.) request for sponsorship and involvement. Take part in CDEs and SAEs.
- Stanley Gibson-chairman of FARM center. Explanation of the history of the FARM center. Grassroots organization.
 - i. Adding a livestock barn and equipment shed
 - ii. Plans to double the size of the market shed
 - iii. Plans to put a cover on the arena
 - iv. Upcoming events: July 15-Bygone Days (antique car and farm equipment show. fundraising event) September 10-Night of Worship, a culmination of the Apple Festival. September 19 through 23rd- County Fair
- Tim Donald-Farm bureau of SC is entering into the land trust business, focusing on production ag lands. Down to two candidates for the land management hire. Encourages utilization of zoning as a tool for land protection. The Farm Bureau has a Youth Leadership conference every June.
- Curtis Brock-Expressed his support for all of the County's FFA programs.
- All three high schools will be participating in Ag Days for the first time in years. Walhalla has not participated in the past.
- Mr. Whiten-Invites FFA to come to his farm for a tour
- Mariah-SAEs: Supervised Ag Experience. Can culminate in a lot of different ways. Looking for opportunities for FFA members to be able to have a farm experience, paid or unpaid.
 - i. Mr. Gibson: lots of potential opportunities through the FARM center
- Discussion ensued about the great value of Ag programs in Oconee County and what can be done to support them.
- Ms. Alexander expressed to the county council members present that in order for ag in the county to continue sustainably we need a commitment from the county to invest in the FARM Center. Tim Donald concurs.
- Mr. Whiten expressed his concern about the amount of foreign investment in Ag in the area.
- Mr. Blanton expressed the important economic impact of forestry in the county
- Ms. Alexander to the County Council members-based off of the ag task force report, do you have a charge for the ag board
 - i. Mr. Davis-try to be a liaison between a standard citizen who wants to be involved in ag and a farmer who may need help or can offer education. Link local buyers with folks in the county selling chicken houses/ag land. Continue to expose people to agricultural opportunities. Expressed that he does not think there is any merit to citizen initiated zoning.
 - ii. Mr. Hart-the AAB is the first warning device for working in the community; finding out what the needs are, and reporting them to the Council.
- Ms. Alexander requested that the council consider the industrial park on

59 as an opportunity to bring in a business that supports Agriculture in Oconee County

- i. Mr. Davis expressed that he feels they must be careful with the park, as it was such a large investment. Wants that investment to be returned back to the citizens. Doesn't see the council closing the door on the possibility of an Agricultural entity.
- o Discussion ensues regarding the great value of having a processing facility in the county.
- o Tim Donald to follow up on the status of the Ag Disclosure Letter.

8. Adjourn: Ms. Whiten made a motion to adjourn at 7:35pm, seconded by Mr. Owens and approved 6/0.