

**BUNCOMBE COUNTY
LAND CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

Members present: Greg Hutchins Joel Mazelis Robert Turner Nancy Nehls Nelson Jacob Wiesman Bob Gale Sarah Fraser Slater Solomon (quorum = 6/11)	Non-members present: Avni Naik – BCSWCD
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There was a quorum, as there were 6 members present. The following discussion occurred between members present:

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 am

- Chair Greg Hutchins called the meeting to order

Approval of Agenda

- No changes to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

- Mr. Turner made a motion to approve the October 19, 2022, meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Mazelis, and the motion passed unanimously.

Updates from Land Conservation Agencies:

- Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
No staff representative present for this meeting.
- Conserving Carolina
No staff representative present for this meeting.
- RiverLink
No staff representative present for this meeting.

Ag Advisory Board (AAB) Update- Avni Naik

- Ms. Zijp and Ms. Naik attended a Farmland Succession Planning training this past month that Ms. Laggis also attended through SAHC. They hope this training will help them be a resource to Buncombe County farmers that are planning for the future of their farms. They have also been working on grant applications that will be submitted in early December, as well as other due diligence work for ongoing easement projects. Staff has

created a GIS story map in collaboration with the GIS department on the importance of conservation in Buncombe County that they were hoping to share with Board Members at this meeting, but there was a data migration that delayed the approval of this project. They hope to have it ready by the next meeting.

- The Board discussed the Easement Purchase Criteria flowchart during previous meetings and provided edits/input. County Management would like LCAB to formally approve the criteria before staff presents it during the Commissioners Meeting in December. Ms. Naik briefly went over the Easement Purchase flowchart with edits from the previous meetings. Mr. Mazelis asked how “development pressure” is generally defined, and Ms. Naik stated that it’s usually defined by the proximity to existing to planned residential or commercial development. Mr. Mazelis stated that developing a strategy to reach out to farmers and landowners before they sell their property to developers is crucial in preventing the loss of undeveloped land. Mr. Mazelis stated that he sits on the Board of Adjustment and by the time they hear about an undeveloped property available on the market, it has already been purchased for development and is too late to be considered for conservation. He wonders if the County has any plans on being more proactive with landowners to reach them before properties are sold to developers and it’s too late to protect them.
- Due to technical difficulties, Ms. Nehls Nelson was unable to talk during the meeting, but called Ms. Naik afterwards and voiced similar concerns to Mr. Mazelis. She stated that while the County has electronic media that they use to advertise the easement program, print newsletters or flyers would be beneficial to pass out to landowners/farmers as an option for cash inflow while keeping their land undeveloped. She stated that many landowners are unaware of easements and feel that their only option is to sell their land. Awareness of easement programs is key in preventing the sale and subsequent development of their property.
- Mr. Turner stated that it may be beneficial to connect with other groups such as Better with Bonds to promote awareness of easements amongst landowners now that the bond has passed.
- Mr. Turner provided one final edit to the flowchart: An arrow moving from the Bond box to the LCAB project approval box to clarify the process.
- Mr. Bob Gale made a motion to recommend the Easement Purchase Criteria flowchart to commissioners, seconded by Mr. Turner, and the motion passed unanimously.
- Ms. Naik brought up the LCAB Priority Map for a final edit. One of the priority regions extends towards a major interstate that Commissioners are hoping to designate as a future growth area due to it being a transportation corridor and its potential for water and sewer expansion. However, designating it as a growth area while being an LCAB focus area would show conflicting interest, so Ms. Phillips at the Planning Dept. was curious if the focus area boundary could be moved away from the major interstate. Ms. Naik stated that she looked at the priority analysis scores at the parcel level and other than a small portion at the eastern corner of that community that scored high, a portion of that community did not score very high. Mr. Gale suggested editing the boundary to include the area that scored high but keep out the areas that did not.

- Mr. Fusco stated that it was likely that parcels that were south of Old 74 would rank higher for conservation than parcels north of it towards I40, so editing the boundary to showcase that would be reasonable. Mr. Hutchins and the Board agreed including areas up to Hominy Creek in the focus area would make sense, and areas north of Hominy towards I40 would be better suited for growth.

Board Discussion/Questions

With no further announcements and discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30am.