Meeting Minutes
Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board - Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District
49 Mount Carmel Rd, Asheville, NC 28787
January 20, 2026, at 11:00 am

Ag Advisory Board Members Present: Chase Hubbard (Chair), Wayne Welch (Vice-Chair), Suzy Rankin, Terri Wells, Mark Diaz & Kyle Guie

Others Present: Ariel Zijp, Martha Ross, Samantha Kirk & Marika Lapham (BC Staff).

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 am.

Approval of the January 20, 2026, Meeting Agenda

- **Wayne Welch made a motion to approve the January 20, 2026, meeting agenda, seconded by Suzy Rankin and the motion passed on the vote.**

Approval of the November 18, 2025, Meeting Minutes

- **Suzy Rankin made a motion to approve the November 18, 2025, meeting minutes, seconded by Wayne Welch and the motion passed on the vote.**

Public Comment: None.

VAD and EVAD Applications: Provided by Martha Ross. 1 EVAD applications.

Terri Wells recused herself stating a conflict of interest.

	VAD Totals		EVAD Totals		VAD/EVAD Combined Totals
Totals as of November 2025	Number of Farms	372	Number of Farms	28	400
	Total Acreage	19555	Total Acreage	2586	22141
New totals for January 2026 if proposed applications are approved	Number of Farms	372	Number of Farms	29	401
	Total Acreage	19778	Total Acreage	2808.63	22586.26

Applicant	Township	Acres	Program	Determination	Phone Number	Tax Lot PIN	Mailing Address	Address of Property	Email
Charles Shook	Sandy Mush	222.63	EVAD	Eligible	828-768-3550	8751821852	164 Willow Creek Rd., Leicester, NC 28748	164 Willow Creek Rd., Leicester, NC 28748	cshookgrading@aol.com

- **Mark Diaz made a motion to approve the EVAD application from Charles Shook, the motion was seconded by Kyle Guie and the motion passed on the vote.**

Farmland Preservation Report: Presented by Ariel Zijp.

Easement Project	Status Update
Morgan Branch Farm A -	Starting Survey and EA
Morgan Branch Farm B -	Starting Survey and EA
Morgan Branch Farm C -	Starting Survey and EA
Slocumb Farm	Starting Survey and EA
Saddlebrook Farm – Neal Grogan	Starting Survey
Brown Legacy Farm – Wayna Brown	Starting Survey
Cedar Hill Farm – Geoff Barndt	Starting Survey
Wilson Farm – Ray Wilson	Starting Survey
Kestrel Herb Farm	Finalizing baseline, deed work and title, Closing scheduled for February 2026
Battle Forest	Finalizing baseline, deed work and title, Closing scheduled for February 2026
Sandy Hollar Farm	Finalizing baseline, deed work and title, Closing scheduled for February 2026
Okoboji Farm	Final closing procedures, subordination agreement signed, lawsuit between neighbor and HOA – attorneys are determining next steps
SAHC Farm Expansion	SAHC & Landowner are resolving dispute – plan to start back up project shortly.
SAHC Jenkin's Valley	Project is ready to move forward soon
Splendor Valley LLC Farm	Updating appraisal required by state and feds and requesting extension for USDA
Rogers Farm: Roger's Farm Trust	Due to complexity of the Trust beneficiaries have to sign an agreement – awaiting the returned signed agreements. Meeting with beneficiaries and attorney Jan 23rd
Roger's Farm: David Rogers	Easement closed December 8th!
Scott Fisher Farm	Resolution to adopt today to cancel project

Fisher Project Resolution: Presented by Ariel Zijp.

The contract needs to be terminated due to unresolvable title issues. Ariel Zijp to work with the budget office to allocate those funds to future projects. Amy Broughton (county legal) will send a formal letter to the landowner advising them on the change.

- **Mark Diaz made a motion to approve the termination of the Fisher Project; the motion was seconded by Kyle Guie and the motion passed on the vote.**

New Easements: Dado Farm Phase 2 & 3: Presented by Martha Ross.
Two new parcels of farmland in Fairview: 31 acres on 100% prime soil and 70 acres are forested with 50% prime agricultural soils includes prime, locally important, statewide important and unique soils (predetermined by USDA standards). Discussion ensued on whether the 31-acre parcel was a part or is still a part of the PUV program. The original tract of land was ~50 acres before the 2 additional donations making for a total of 150-acre conservation plot. The county to cover the transaction costs.

Upcoming plan: Site visits are scheduled for February 4, 2026, at 9am; Suzy, Mark, and Kyle are expected to join. Dorothy Sneddon (landowner) to join in the February Board Meeting with hopes to take the project to the commissioners in March.

Updates: Presented by Ariel Zijp:

- **HB126 – Farmland Preservation Ordinance:** Ariel Zijp and Martha Ross have been working on updating the Farmland Preservation Ordinance. A draft is under review with Jennifer Harrison, director of Buncombe County Soil and Water. Ariel Zijp and Martha Ross expect to bring an updated draft to the February Ag Advisory board meeting for discussion.
- **NC Tax Credit:** Ariel Zijp and Martha Ross are in communication with Amy Broughton to better understand how this tax credit will affect landowners. Amy Broughton will attend the February Ag Advisory board meeting to advise the board. Terri Wells learned most recently that the state tax credit is only limited to two years and is already underway. Therefore, donations made in 2026 need to be reported by the end of January 2027. The tax credit is up to 25% in NC.
- **Agricultural Growth Zone (AGZ) Application:** Ariel Zijp and Martha Ross are collecting estimates for future projects to collect a working number for both the allocation of annual funding and the larger asks for potential bonds. A new AGZ application can be submitted in August of 2026. Terri Wells added that the max request can be 2M, with matching funds from the county. Discussion ensued.

Announcements & Discussions: Presented by Boad Members.

Terri Wells spoke on the very well-received presentation by Ariel Zijp and Martha Ross at Upper Hominy with more than 70 guests in attendance. There has already been interest in hosting a meeting in Jupiter as well; Exciting and wonderful momentum!

Wayne Welch made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Suzy Rankin and Kyle Guie, and the motion passed on the vote.

With no further announcements or discussion, the meeting ended at 11:45 am.