Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board

Meeting Agenda for November 17, 2026, at 11:00 am

Buncombe County Ag and Land Resources Office

49 Mount Carmel Rd, Asheville, NC 28806 Conference room B

Call to order	Chase Hubbard, Chair
Approval of November 17, 2026, meeting agenda	Board
Approval of October 20, 2026, meeting minutes	Board
Public Comment	Public
Applications for VAD/EVAD	Martha Ross
Farmland Preservation Project Report	Ariel Zijp
Title Policy Vote	Ariel Zijp
Rogers Farm Trust Discussion & Vote	Board
Announcements and Discussion	Board

To enter closed session: G.S.143-318.11(a)(2)(5)

Meeting Minutes
Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board - Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District
49 Mount Carmel Rd, Asheville, NC 28787
October 20, 2026 at 11:03 am

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:03AM.

Approval of the October 20, 2026, Meeting Agenda

- **Mark Diaz made a motion to approve October 20, 2026, meeting agenda with an amendment to move public comment to the end of the meeting, seconded by Suzy Rankin and the motion passed on the vote.**

Approval of September 15, 2026, Meeting Minutes

- **Joel Mowry made a motion to approve September 15, 2026, meeting minutes, seconded by Suzy Rankin and the motion passed on the vote.**

Public Comment

- Members of the public that were present showed interest in the Conservation Easement program and other land protection initiatives in Buncombe County.

VAD and EVAD Applications: Provided by Martha Ross. 1 new EVAD application, 1 EVAD renewal application, and 6 new VAD applications.

- **Suzy Rankin made a motion to approve the VAD renewal application, seconded by Mark Diaz, and the motion passed on the vote.**

	Primary	Application Type	Acres	Township	Street Address
1	Dustin & Amanda Brown	EVAD NEW	25.8	Leicester	47 Long Ln, Leicester, NC 82748
2	David A. & Kimberly K. Everett	EVAD RENEWAL	130	Leicester	432 Big Sandy Mush Rd.
3	Steven Sizemore & Carol	VAD NEW	129.5	Fletcher	232 Lower Brush Creek Road
4	Rick & Cynthia Rhinehart	VAD NEW	2.7	Leicester	99999 Browntown Rd, Leicester, NC 28748
5	Rick & Cynthia Rhinehart	VAD NEW	2.5	Leicester	72 Ruby Brown Ln, Leicester, NC 28748
6	Rick & Cynthia Rhinehart	VAD NEW	11.3	Leicester	230 Browntown Rd, Leicester, NC 28748
7	Rick & Cynthia Rhinehart	VAD NEW	7.7	Leicester	57 Ruby Brown Ln, Leicester, NC 28748
8	Rick & Cynthia Rhinehart	VAD NEW	17.4	Leicester	99999 Ruby Brown Ln, Leicester, NC 28748

	VAD Totals		EVAD Totals		VAD/EVAD Combined Totals
Totals as of September 2026	Number of Farms	318	Number of Farms	24	342
	Total Acreage	16278	Total Acreage	2395	18673
New totals for October 2026 if proposed applications are approved	Number of Farms	320	Number of Farms	25	345
	Total Acreage	16449	Total Acreage	2420.8	18870

Farmland Preservation Report: Presented by Ariel Zijp.

Project Name	Acres	Community	Funding Source	Status and Tasks
Roger's Family Farm: Roger's Farm Trust Tract	156.36	Turkey Creek	State	Landowners back to talking with beneficiaries to try and get them to sign. Beneficiaries are blocking project from moving forward
Okoboji Farm	44.77	Fairview	Bond	HOA and neighbor conflict resolved, moving to closing by end of year
Cedar Hill Farm	59.98	Alexander	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	awaiting NCDA review of survey, title work, EA, and appraisal
Slocumb Farm	133.13	Turkey Creek	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting for landowners to resolve title issues and road access
Morgan Branch Farm A - Dairy Barn	108.99	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	EA phase 1 discovered oil tank which will require a phase 2, starting phase 2. Awaiting grant review
Morgan Branch Farm B - Other Place	74.21	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting on NCDA review of survey, title work, EA, appraisal
Morgan Branch C - Dave's Place	146.92	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting on NCDA review of survey, title work, EA, appraisal
Wilson Farm	20	Fairview	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting for landowners to resolve title issues - on pause until resolved
Saddlebrook Farm	22.13	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	awaiting NCDA review of survey, title work, EA, and appraisal
Brown Legacy Farm	25.2	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	awaiting due diligence updates from contractors after NCDA review
SAHC Jenkins Branch	99	Alexander	Donation	survey in the works
Dador Farms Phase 2	31.5	Fairview	Donation	survey draft complete, Deed draft in the works, starting EA & BDR
Dador Farms Phase 3	65	Fairview	Donation	survey draft complete, Deed draft in the works, starting EA & BDR
Cole sisters Farm	18	Newfound	Donation	On Hold due to family dispute
Rymer - Davis Dairy	51.4	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	TC approved by the BOC, NCDA eligibility application, due diligence to start soon
Rymer - Davis Forest	60.7	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	TC approved by the BOC, NCDA eligibility application, due diligence to start soon
Rymer - Davis Home Tract	17.37	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	TC approved by the BOC, NCDA eligibility application, due diligence to start soon
Sluder Branch	59.3	Leicester	Bond	Coming to AAB for approval in October
Ruby Brown Farm	41.67	Newfound	Bond	TC approved by the BOC, due diligence to start soon

New Easement Projects: Presented by Ariel Zijp & Martha Ross

- Sluder Branch Farm
    - 59 acres of Sluder Branch Road in Leicester.
    - Working farm, 58% prime soils, adjacent to hundreds of acres of conserved land through SAHC and Buncombe County Soil and Water.
    - 1 residential area, 2 Farmstead Areas (1 for farm support, 1 a regular farmstead area), and 3 excluded areas with homesites.

Title Review and Policy Presentation: Presented by Ariel Zijp & Martha Ross

- Staff presented general information on the title review process and policy that is a part of the conservation easement process. See the attached presentation slides for more information.

The Board voted to enter closed session in accordance to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(2)(5).

- Terri Wells made a motion to enter closed session, seconded by Suzy Rankin. The motion passed on the vote.

  Project specific discussion ensued.

- Terri Wells made a motion to exit closed session, seconded by Kyle Guie. The motion passed on the vote.

Suzy Rankin made a motion to approve the Sluder Branch Farm conservation easement project. Mark Diaz seconded. The motion passed on the vote.

Board Member Vacancy

- There is one vacancy open on the Board. Vanessa Campbell, a previous farmer who has land in a conservation easement, applied for the vacant position. She has farmed in Buncombe County for over 20 years.

Terri Wells made a motion to recommend Vanessa Campbell for the Agricultural Advisory Board member vacancy, seconded by Wayne Welch. The motion passed on the vote.

Announcements & Discussions

- Conservation Meeting in Jupiter on Thursday November 12, 2026 from 5:30-8:00PM.
    - Speakers from Land Trusts as well as the County's Farmland Preservation Program will give short presentations on land conservation in Buncombe County.
    - Jupiter Fire Department, 331 Jupiter Road, Weaverville.
- Friends of Agriculture Breakfast in Leicester on November 10, 2026 from 8:00-10:00AM.
    - Topic: Getting to Know Buncombe County Ag & Land Resources – what the department offers and how we can serve our community.
    - Leicester Community Center, 2979 New Leicester Hwy, Leicester.

Terri Wells made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Wayne Welch, and the motion passed on the vote.

With no further announcements or discussion, the meeting ended at 12:25pm.

Title Policy and Issues

Presented by

Ariel Zijp & Martha Ross

Buncombe Ag and Land Resources

Title Overview

1. **What is Title?** - Legal ownership and rights over a property
2. **Chain of Title** - A "family tree" of property ownership, documenting every transfer of title from the original owner to the present owner
3. **Title Search -** Reveals the current ownership, legal description, and any encumbrances or restrictions affecting a property
4. **Importance of clear title -** Essential when dealing with easements because it ensures that the property's ownership and rights are free from disputes, liens, or encumbrances that could complicate the easement's validity or enforceability

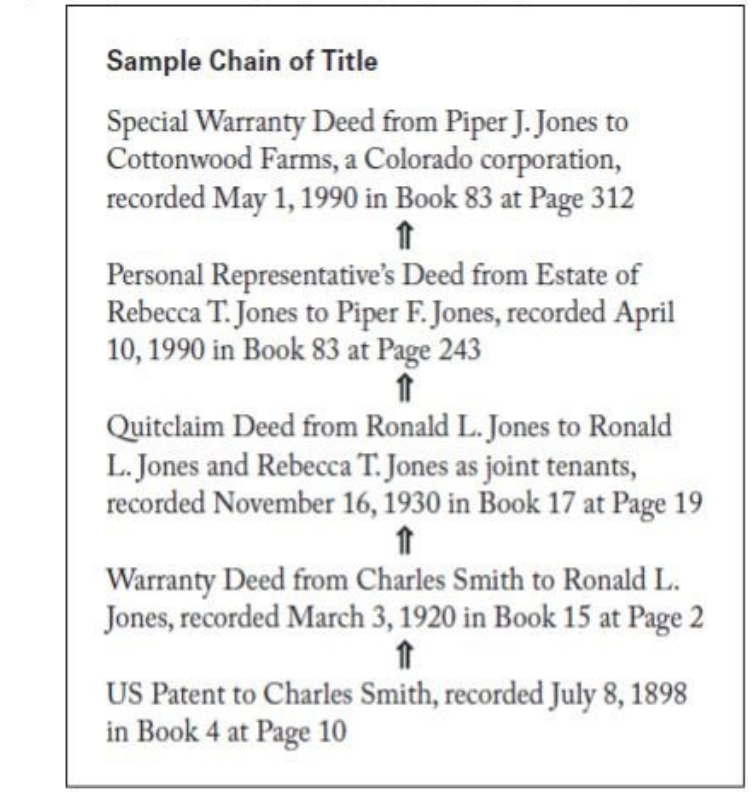


Figure 3-1: Sample Chain of Title

Title Insurance

- **What is title insurance?**
  - Title insurance refers to an insurance policy that protects the insured against loss resulting from defects or liens upon the title. The title commitment is converted to a title insurance policy when the easement holder closes the transaction and when all conditions listed in the title commitment have been fulfilled.
  - Unlike other insurance policies that insure against future losses, title insurance protects the insured from an event that occurred before the policy was issued.
  - Title insurance is purchased for a one-time fee at closing and covers the entire time that an entity has an interest in the property.
- **Why do we need title insurance?**
  - Title insurance is considered the best defense of title - a title insurance company will defend any claim based on an insurable defect and pay claims if the title proves to be defective.
  - Grants require easement projects to have title insurance because it protects their investment in the land.

Title Review Process

As we've increased the number projects we're working on, we have seen an increase in title issues. We've adjusted our process to respond and address these issues in a different way, to save us time and money.

How our approach has evolved -

1. **No preliminary title review** (up until 3 years ago) – Didn't have funds to spend before easement project started. Completing title commitment after receiving funding, after spending transaction costs.
2. **Preliminary Title Review** (past 3 years) - Attorney does a general 60-year title review and notes any issues they may show up.
3. **Preliminary Title Opinion** (current method) – Attorney performs full, 60-year title search and provides us with list of exceptions and potential issues. We have some funding for preliminary review and estimate appraisals, so we can fund this work before a project's transaction costs are approved.

Title Exceptions

Exceptions – Also known as an exclusion or defect, is any item affecting the fee title ownership of the property.

- Exceptions are not always problematic or impact the ability to purchase title insurance on a property.
- Called exceptions because those rights will not be conveyed in the closing (ex: utility easements, mortgages, mining leases)

Examples of common exceptions identified in a title search:

- Utility easements
- Access easements (ROW)
- Restrictive covenants
- Mortgages
- Liens

Examples of Common Title Issues

Title issues that can be found in title searches:

- Errors or omissions in deeds
- Undisclosed heirs
- Potential boundary issues
- No legal access to Property

Title issues that we have seen and addressed:

- Sign easement release
- Clarifying no liens or mortgages on a Property
- Deed restrictions on a Property deed
- Incomplete signatures on right-of-way documents

Title Review Policy Overview

- Moving forward, we will procure a full **Preliminary Title Opinion** from our project attorney. This is a full, 60-year title search that provides us with list of exceptions and possible issues. This will determine if the title insurance company will insure the easement.
- **Simple Title Issues** – Localized, single document, or clerical errors that impact the title to the Property. If the issue is a simple fix – staff will direct easement legal counsel to work to fix the issue for the easement to move forward. Examples include:
  - Clearing a lien on a Property
  - Sign easement release
  - Minor public records mistakes

- **Complex Title Issues** - Multi-party, multi-records, and often historical issues that impact the title. Staff will consult with project attorneys to get multiple opinions. Staff will relay the issue and potential solutions to the landowners and let them know that the title must be clear to move forward with the project. Once the title issue is resolved, the conservation easement can move forward. Examples include:
  - Gaps in the chain of title or undisclosed/unidentified heirs
  - Boundary disputes
  - Other party claims title to the Property

Need a motion to Adopt this policy at the next meeting

November 2026 EVAD/VAD Report

VAD/EVAD Applications for Board Approval

	Primary	Application Type	Acres	Township	Street Address
1	Kyle Israel and Sesalie Smathers	VAD NEW	15.75	Leicester	1868 Bear Creek Rd, Leicester, NC 28748
2	Kyle Israel and Sesalie Smathers	VAD NEW	31.68	Leicester	99999 Jake Martin Rd, Leicester, NC 28748

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	Total Acreage	16449	Total Acreage	2420.8	18869.8
New totals for November 2026 if proposed applications are approved	Number of Farms	322	Number of Farms	25	347
	Total Acreage	16496	Total Acreage	2420.8	18917

Farmland Preservation Report

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Project Name	Acres	Community	Funding Source	Status and Tasks
Roger's Family Farm: Roger's Farm Trust Tract	156.36	Turkey Creek	State	discussing next steps with county legal and AAB
Okoboji Farm	44.77	Fairview	Bond	Closing by end of year
Cedar Hill Farm	59.98	Alexander	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	awaiting NCDA review of survey, EA
Slocumb Farm	133.13	Turkey Creek	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting for landowners to resolve title issues and road access
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Wilson Farm	20	Fairview	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	waiting for landowners to resolve title issues - on pause until resolved
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Brown Legacy Farm	25.2	Newfound	Bond ADFP AGZ Grant	awaiting NCDA review on all due dilligence items
SAHC Jenkins Branch	99	Alexander	Donation	Due diligence - survey, deed drafting
Dador Farms Phase 2	31.5	Fairview	Donation	survey draft complete, Deed draft in the works, starting EA & BDR
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