

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
March 13, 2008
7:00 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex Building, located at 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina, for the purpose of holding a Workshop on Voluntary Agricultural Districts.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

James E. Prevatte **Chairman**
Bill Memory, **Vice Chairman**
Ricky Bullard
Ronald Gore

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

William S. Clark, **County Manager**
Steven W. Fowler, **County Attorney**
June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Amon E. McKenzie
Sammie Jacobs
Lynwood Norris

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

Bobbie Faircloth, **Deputy Finance Officer**

OTHERS in ATTENDANCE:

Maximilian Merrill, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Dr. Theodore A. Fietschans, NC State University
Edward E. Davis, Director/Engineering Technician, Soil and Water
Donna Register, District Conservationist, USDA, NRCS
Phyllis Creech, Soil and Water
Lloyd Ransom, District Supervisor, Soil and Water
Jimmy Gore, District Supervisor, Soil and Water
Sam Edwards, Senior Environmental Technician, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
James A. Sarvis, Chairman, Columbus Soil and Water Conservation District
Don Eggert, Interim County Planner
Marilyn Meares, RC&D
Monica Gore, Farm Services Agency
Richard Gore, Tax Administrator
Kandance Whitehead, Register of Deeds

WORKSHOP CALLED to ORDER:

At 7:00 P.M., Chairman Prevatte called the March 13, 2008 Workshop to order, and requested that Edward Davis who spearheaded this workshop to introduce the speakers.

INTRODUCTION of SPEAKERS:

Edward Davis, Director/Engineering Technician, Soil and Water Conservation, introduced the members of the Soil and Water Conservation District, Interim County Planner, Farm Service Agency representative, the County Tax Administrator, the Register of Deeds and the two (2) speakers, namely Maximilian Merrill and Doctor Theodore A. Feitshans.

PRESENTATION by Maximilian Merrill:

Mr. Merrill stated the following:

1. I work with the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and Commissioner Steve Troxler, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
2. Over the last several years, many of the farms in North Carolina have diminished into other types of development;
3. Many of the farmers have reached the age where they can no longer actively farm and have no family member who can carry on the operation effectively;
4. The Farmland Preservation Trust Fund has many programs and funding sources to help protect the farms in North Carolina;

5. The area in this program that would interest Columbus County the most, is the Voluntary Agricultural Districts, which involves agricultural conservation easements; **and**
6. Doctor Theodore A. Feitshans will present the details about the Voluntary Agricultural Districts.

PRESENTATION by DOCTOR THEODORE A. FEITSHANS:

Doctor Feitshans stated the following:

1. I work with the Department of Agriculture and Resource Economy at North Carolina State University;
2. Over the past several decades, we have seen many of the farms in North Carolina diminish into industry and housing development;
3. We are losing valuable farmland as the population in North Carolina continues to rapidly grow;
4. There are tools and programs that can help protect our farmland for the rural and urban areas;
5. The part of this program that would interest Columbus County, at this time, is the Voluntary Agricultural District Program;
6. This program is voluntary;
7. A farmer may place all of his farm, or a portion of his farm, in this program;
8. The farmer may withdraw from the program with a thirty (30) day notice; **and**
9. The Voluntary Agricultural District Program will require a County Ordinance, Conservation Agreement and an Agricultural Advisory Board.

After additional discussion was conducted, and several questions were answered, it was the general consensus of the Board for Edward Davis to fine tune the draft copy of the Ordinance he had prepared earlier and present it to the Soil and Water Conservation Board for their approval. If the Ordinance is approved by the Soil and Water Conservation Board, then he is to present this document to the Board of Commissioners for their approval.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 8:19 P.M., Chairman Prevatte stated the Voluntary Agricultural District Workshop was adjourned.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

JAMES E. PREVATTE, Chairman