

Farmland Preservation Committee
Minutes
June 16, 2021 – 10:00am
Oconee Government Annex Conference Room

Persons Present: Thomas Verner – Chairman, Adam Hammond - Member, Michael Ransom – Member, Thad Padgett – Member, Mallory O'Steen – Athens Land Trust, Justin Merrifield – Athens Land Trust and Monte Stephens – Oconee County Extension Agent.

Minutes approval: Regular and Executive Session Minutes to the November 13, 2020 meeting were read and approved by the Committee after a motion to approve by Michael Ransom and a second by Thad Padgett.

Update on Prior Year ACEP-ALE Application: Mallory O'Steen informed the Committee that Athens Land Trust and Georgia USDA-NRCS staff visited the Allen Powers / Claire Milton farm on Colham Ferry Road recently and the site visit went very good. We are still waiting to see how this farm ranks against other farms submitted in Georgia and should know the results of the state ranking soon.

Current Year ACEP-ALE Application Process: The Committee discussed the fact that the 2021 Ranking Sheet for Georgia could possibly have some changes. One of the suggested changes would give more detailed credit for local match funds, which would better acknowledge the local tax dollars being contributed from the Oconee County SPLOST.

Since USDA-NRCS has not announced a signup deadline for this year's ACEP-ALE applications, the committee decided to establish September 30, 2021 as Oconee County's deadline for accepting ACEP-ALE applications to compete for local match funds. Site visits will be made during October to the offered farms and the Committee will plan to rank those farms during November 2021. The highest ranked farm will be presented to the Oconee Board of Commissioners on November 30, 2021 for consideration at their December 7, 2021 meeting.

The Committee set Tuesday, July 27, 2021 as the date for our Public ACEP-ALE Meeting to be held at 6:30 pm at the J. Phil Campbell, UGA Research and Education Center, 1420 Experiment Station Road in Watkinsville. We appreciate the Athens Land Trust staff for once again agreeing to coordinate with Georgia NRCS staff to conduct the program for this meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:45 am.



Thomas Verner, Chairman