

Farmland Preservation Committee
Public Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2022 – 6:30pm
J Phil Campbell UGA Research and Education Center

Persons Present: Thomas Verner – Chairman, Michael Ransom - Member, Justin Merrifield and Dyan Holt – Athens Land Trust, Carsen Dean – Oconee County Extension Service, Jose Pagan - USDA-NRCS and Oconee landowner, Stan Michael.

Minutes approval: Regular Session Minutes of the May 27, 2022 meeting were emailed to the Committee, the Committee was polled and the minutes were approved by the Committee.

Welcome and Introduction: On behalf of the Oconee County Extension Service, Carsen Dean welcomed everyone to the Farmland Preservation meeting. Thomas Verner thanked the Farmland Preservation Committee members, Athens Land Trust and the Oconee County Board of Commissioners for their continued support of permanently preserving farmland in Oconee County for future generations. After providing some background on the more than 900 acres that have been or are in the process of being preserved with local matching funds in Oconee County, those in attendance were informed that September 9, 2022 is the final date to submit ACEP-ALE applications to the local USDA-NRCS or Extension Service office for the Committee to visit and rank. The Committee will then present the highest ranked farm to the Oconee Board of Commissioners at their September 27th meeting for local SPLOST funding consideration and the Commissioners will vote on the highest ranked farm at their October 4th meeting.

Overview of 2023 ACEP-ALE Program: Justin Merrifield presented a Power Point to those in attendance to better inform them about the requirements to qualify for and participate in the USDA-NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program for Agricultural Land Easements. Justin explained how Athens Land Trust serves as the entity to submit the ACEP-ALE application for landowners, then hold and monitor the approved / recorded easements in perpetuity. Several questions were asked about the program and Justin made sure everyone in attendance was better informed about how the ACEP-ALE program worked by the end of the meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.



Thomas Verner, Chairman