

Farmland Preservation Committee

Public Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2024 – 6:30pm

J Phil Campbell UGA Research and Education Center

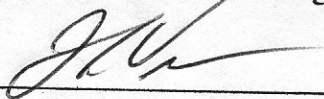
Persons Present: Thomas Verner – Chairman, Dyan Holt – Athens Land Trust, Carsen Dean – Oconee Extension Service, Sharon Swagger - USDA-NRCS State Office and Oconee landowners, Ronnie Hardigree and Melissa Steele.

Minutes approval: Regular Session Minutes of the April 18, 2024 meeting were approved by polling of 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. Those in attendance were informed that August 9, 2024 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 August 27, 2024 meeting for local SPLOST funding consideration and the Commissioners will vote on the highest ranked farm at their September 10, 2024 meeting.

Overview of 2024 ACEP-ALE Program: Dyan Holt and Sharon Swagger each 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. Dyan 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. Questions about the ACEP-ALE program were asked by those in attendance and Dyan, Sharon and Thomas 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