

Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board Minutes

March 23, 2023 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Augusta County Government Center Smith West

Members in Attendance: *Sonny Balsley, Jeremy Shifflett, Cole Heizer, Andrew Crummett, Doug Horn, John Benner*

Absent: *Willie Ruleman, Keith Phillips*

John opened the meeting at 6:30. The minutes from the December 8th meeting were reviewed.

Old Business:

Sonny opened the meeting stating everyone to keep Ralph Griffin in thoughts and prayers. Mr. Griffin endured a farming accident the week before.

Augusta Ag Appreciation Gala: John stated that the Ag Industry Board had 8 tickets available as a Barn Raiser Sponsor for the Augusta Ag Appreciation Gala. Tickets are will call at the door. Jeremy, Sonny are attending. Sonny mentioned if he the board had an extra ticket, he would use it for a plus one. John stated that would not be an issue.

John: The event is shaping up well. It looks as though there are over 269 confirmed in attendance as of Friday, March 17 and food has been ordered for 320. There are over two dozen sponsors, so community support has been strong.

Cole Heizer: Is there a plan to repeat the program? John: Tentatively the gala committee is considering 2025. All surplus gala funds will be donated to youth ag programs in Augusta County.

New Business

USDA Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP program).

John stated that he had learned from several other county Extension agents that the program can provide financial support to farmers that are growing many crops that are not covered by conventional crop insurance. The program is similar to crop insurance in that producers have to pay a program fee, rather than a premium, to enroll. Producers must record stated yields of crops and in case of hay production, have a forage quality test to determine hay quality. If yield and/or quality drops below a certain recorded point then producers may be eligible for an indemnity payment. In Carroll County, producers have averaged a significant indemnity payment over the program fees by participating in the program. John asked the board if they would like to invite Laura Begoon, FSA county director to come to the next board meeting to talk about the program. The board agreed.

Program Ideas for 2023

John mentioned that we as a board to plan a program event for 2023. Technology Event

Jeremy Shifflett: A focus point of a program would and could be technology adoption by farmers and producers of various commodities. GPS guidance, variable rate application of fertilizer and crop protection, weather apps, interactive mobile soil maps, etc. Use of drones for drone scouting.

Sonny: What time of year could we host such an event?

John: My suggestion would be the fall, in between harvest dates. Sometime mid-September. We could locate a farm to host the event.

Cole: Picking a date and sticking to it may allow farmers to do their best to plan to be there.

The board then concurred mid-September would be an ideal time.

Recycling wrap plastic:

Jeremy: Over the year's farmers have had an interest in reducing farm waste from plastic polymers used for wrapping hay bales, ensiling fermented forages and preserving harvested forage. However, the companies that have had an intermittent interest in recycling these plastics have not had persistent demand. Another challenge is the soil and dirt that gets on the plastics that would need to be removed to enable recycling.

Cole: Additionally, the end product value is low, and not cost effective when compared to manufacturing new plastics.

John: I have learned that researchers at University of Maryland have been working on a project reusing farm plastics. Additionally, Virginia Tech Dairy Science had been working with VT Chemical Engineering and W&M to develop a bio-polymer for ag use. We could investigate these topics.

Cole: Could we incorporate these topics into a technology field day?

Sonny: Could we include the NAP program as part of a technology field day.

John: I think we could.

Sonny asked for a vote to affirm that the Ag Industry Board would support hosting a technology field day in the fall of 2023. All voted in the affirmative.

The meeting then was adjourned

Next meeting date: Tentatively scheduled for June 8, 2023.