**Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board Minutes**

*Thursday, August 31, 2023 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM*

*Augusta County Extension Office*

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

Members Absent: *Willie Ruleman*

Sonny Balsley opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

**Old Business:**

Sonny reviewed the USDA Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) that was discussed at the previous meeting in June. John mentioned that he has confirmed a evening educational meeting focused on the NAP program and the Livestock Indemnity Program for Oct. 18 at the Government Center Smith Transfer meeting rooms. Meeting will not feature a meal but may feature light snacks.

Augusta County Ag Appreciation Event/Gala – John stated that the Ag Appreciation Event committee is planning to hold the event again in 2024, then will switch to a every other year event. The 2024 gala will feature Robert Mills as the main speaker. Sponsorship is expected to remain at $1000 for the event. John asked if the board would consider a conditional approval of the $1,000 once the sponsorship letters for the event are drafted. Sonny asked the board for a motion. Jeremy Shifflett moved to approve the expenditure of up to the $1000 for the sponsorship of the 2024 Ag Appreciation Gala. Motion was seconded by Keith Phillips. After a vote motion carried and was adopted.

Aerial Cover Crop Seeding Field day/technology event. John stated that the aerial cover crop seed day is proceeding as planned, scheduled for Oct. 20. Aerial seeding was done earlier in the week on Tuesday, August 29 by Valley Ag Drone. Seeding mix included 47.9 lbs of Rye, 1.7 lbs forage radish, 6.3 lbs crimson clover, 8.3 lbs hairy vetch. Program will include breakfast, beginning at 7:30 and will include several presentations before walking out to the field to observe cover crop condition and a flying drone demonstration. John asked the board if they would cover from their budget, the cost of the seeding. John stated that Valley Ag Drone quoted their minimum fee for the seeding at $500. John also stated he would work to secure several additional sponsors to cover the cost of the breakfast. Sonny asked the board for a motion to approve the expenditure of the aerial drone seeding of $500. Keith Phillips made the motion to approve the expenditure of $500 for the drone seeding. The motion was seconded by Cole Heizer. The motion was then adopted.

Board Membership

Sonny reviewed the current vacancy for the Middle River district position. The board discussed the possibility of filling the vacancy and filling other vacancies.

Drought Declaration

John stated that on Tuesday he received a request from County Administration to consider drafting a resolution requesting a drought declaration for the county. A drought declaration would assist farmers by making several Farm Service Agency programs accessible to them to assist with financial strains from the drought. John reviewed available data from the US Drought Monitor. Currently 100% of the county area is in a D0 (abnormally dry) designation. 51% of the county is in a D1 (moderate drought) designation. Sonny asked the board their opinion on the drought status in the county and if the Ag Industry Board would support the request for the drought declaration. Discussion ensued on the general lack of rainfall throughout the year and its impacts on crop yields. The board then agreed to support a request for a drought declaration.

The next meeting date was tentatively set for November 30th. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.