

## **MEETING NOTES**

### **Catawba County Farm & Food Sustainability Plan**

#### **Working Committee**

**January 24, 2013**

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Barbara Beatty, Mike Burris, Jeff Carpenter, Jeff Elmore, Martha Green, Clarence Hood, Nathan Huret, Tom Kenney, Al King, Jeremy Lee and Julie Lehmann

#### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Mary George and Sue Ballbach with Planning, Parks, and Development; Mary Furtado and Haley Kadish with County Managers Office

#### **MEETING WITH PARTNERS – SCHOOLS AND MUNICIPALITIES**

Mary George welcomed everyone in attendance. She asked Mike Burris and Clarence Hood to update the Committee on the partner meeting they had with the schools. Mike informed the Committee that he and Clarence met with the superintendents of the three school systems and the President of Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC). He reported that they all were very engaged and took ownership for the plan recommendations where they have been identified as lead agency or supporting entity. Two of the individuals they met with had farming background which furthered their support for the Plan. Dr. Hinshaw, President of CVCC, stated that he wanted to be involved with the Committee and he had ideas for projects that he would like to start at the college. One idea was to have a regional program at CVCC which would be structured as a 2-year core agricultural program which would allow students to move on to another college to finish their degree.

Clarence added that the school representatives were very positive about having agricultural and food-based programs in the schools. They also suggested that culinary training and raised-bed planting could be offered at the schools. Clarence noted that it was a good time to meet with the superintendents in that some were new to their positions so fresh opportunities are being welcomed. It was noted that having these programs in the schools could help with student retention. Barbara commented that the middle school students would be a good target group. Clarence informed the Committee that there are 30 teachers who will be attending the "Agriculture in the Classroom" training in February.

Mary Furtado informed the Committee that she met with representatives from the municipalities and reviewed the seven actions items where they were identified as lead or supporting entity. They were supportive of all of them with exception of action item 2C which addressed developing growth strategies to minimize impacts to farmland. It was suggested that it be reworded so as not to pit “no growth” against “economic development.” This action item has now been re-worded to “Pursue economic development opportunities with municipalities on land served by infrastructure to preserve farmland where infrastructure is not available.” The city representatives noted that the image of farming is changing with new technology and it will be critical to provide new learning opportunities to support it. Mary stated that there will upcoming meetings with the Economic Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce, Western Piedmont Council of Governments and Farm Bureau to similarly review their corresponding action items and obtain support. Due to the need to meet with these partners before the community input meetings, the public meetings have been delayed until early March. Advertising for these meetings will include individual mail notices to property owners in the present-use program (which was done for the July public meetings), newspaper articles, Catawba County e-newsletter and other outreach conducted by the County’s Public Information Officer.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME & LEAD AGENCY ROLES**

Mary Furtado and Jeff reviewed the updated implementation timeframe spreadsheet which was a result of the Committee’s work at its December meeting and follow-up with a subcommittee. Mary noted that the document has been reorganized by action items for improved readability and consolidated to eliminate redundancy as the Committee suggested. The partners were now identified as either “L” (lead) or “X” (supporting entity) which indicates their role in implementing the action item. The lead agency will be responsible for calling the supporting entities together to complete the action item. Barbara suggested that with the County’s budget process underway, it would be best to identify those action items which have a budget implication so it could be added to the process. Mary commented that there were few changes to the short-mid-long term designations but asked the Committee to review the document to make sure that they agreed with it.

In reviewing the document, Martha noted that the Catawba Valley Medical Center was in the process of developing goals for healthy eating at the hospital. They are also starting a small garden to grow fresh vegetables/fruit.

Clarence suggested that several of the mid-range action items be moved to short-term since they addressed tasks in the schools which the superintendents supported at their meeting. He suggested moving the following items to short-term:

- Policy to support agriculture education in all grade levels of schools

- Incorporate locations for gardens in new school construction and add to existing schools
- Identify existing video segments to be shown in schools
- Explore establishment of agricultural programs in all high schools
- Identify/develop distance learning programs for high school students

He also suggested that “all aspects of agriculture” should be offered for a broad-based educational degree program, and not just “fruit and vegetable production.” Also he suggested incorporating Dr. Hinshaw’s suggestion about a 2-year transfer agriculture program. The Committee agreed with these changes.

Clarence asked a question about whether the programs to promote fruit and vegetable production should be moved up in order to get production started. With that, he suggested that the action item: “Host demonstration events and classes” be changed to short-term. The Committee also agreed.

A question was asked about moving the GAP certification timeframe up, but without the fruit and vegetable production it was noted that this would be premature. Julie commented that the Conover Farmer’s Market has 22 vendors with half of them being from Catawba County. She noted that a grower could move 10 acres of vegetables at a farmers market so she questioned what would be the scale of production to move into the arena where GAP certification is needed. It was responded that when the demonstration plots are developed then it can be determined at what level GAP certification is needed. This allows the farmer to start thinking about the framework for GAP certification so when they expand out in several years they will be in a position to become certified.

Upon additional individual review of the implementation timeframe and agency roles, the Committee supported the document with the changes noted.

### **PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE**

Mary George introduced a timeframe prioritization exercise for the Committee to complete. The exercise ranks the short, mid and long range action items within each timeframe. This will give structure for the implementing entity as they complete their action items. The Committee then individually completed their own prioritizations. Mary informed the Committee that she will put together the results which will be presented at their February meeting.

**NEXT MEETING**

Mary informed the Committee that their next meeting will be on February 28. There being no other business, the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary George, Project Manager