**THE AGRICULTURE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Buddy Jennings Facility

350 Ballard Court, West Columbia, SC 29172

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**

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| Frances Price, Chair | Adair McKoy |
| Mike Shirer | Bradley Orr |
| Stevie Still | Michael Gibson |
| Ben Gramling | Chalmers Carr via phone |
| Darren Carter | Benjie Andrew |
| Mac Sanders |  |

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT**

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| Frank Looper | Earl Thrailkill |

**EXCUSED ABSENT COMMISSION MEMBERS**

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| Lewis Hicks | Wayne Belger |

**OTHERS PRESENT**

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| Sam Quinney, SCDA | Alden Dalton, SCDA |
| Gary Spires, SC Farm Bureau | Ellen Lloyd, SCDA |

Call to Order/Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Price called the meeting to order at approximately 10:03 a.m. and welcomed everyone. She gave the prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Price noted that Chalmers Carr will be joining via phone. She said Lewis Hicks and Earl Thrailkill have excused absences. Mrs. Lloyd said she has not heard from Frank Looper. Board member Bradley Orr to reach out to Mr. Looper. Chair Price announced an agenda change saying the Corn and Soybean MOU status update and review and discussion of motions from the November 2024 meeting will be moved to the end of the Old Business items.

**Guest Reports**

* SC Department of Agriculture – Sam Quinney said SCDA was made aware on February 5th that the House Ways and Means committee added the proviso for commodity board interest retention “44.cbs (AGRI: Commodity Boards Interest Retention) Commodity Boards shall be allowed to retain and carry forward any accrued interest generated from the Boards' accounts held by the State, including interest generated from assessments collected from producers, as those terms are defined in Section 46- 17-40.” Mr. Quinney said the proviso is moving along and he hopes to have an update at the next meeting.
* SC Farm Bureau - Gary Spires congratulated Sam Quinney on his performance and great job he did in the competition at the American Farm Bureau Convention in San Antonio representing South Carolina. Mr. Spires discussed the following:
* Farm Bureau putting together a Farm Bill study committee;
* Tom Mullikin new confirmed agency head Department of Natural Resources;
* Myra Reece appointed interim Director of the SC Department of Environmental Services;
* Pushing hard for the Conservation Bank fund to be funded at last year’s level;
* Annexation bill being discussed which allows farmers to opt out when a city annexes their property into the municipality. Farms outside the city municipality have the right to farm protection;
* Water SC;
* Land Trust re-cap;
* NRCS grants done through the inflation reduction act are frozen currently.

**Old Business**

* Review and approval of minutes from the November 13, 2024, meeting – ***A motion was made and seconded that the minutes from the November 13, 2024, meeting be approved as typed. All were in favor. Motion carried.***
* SC Cotton Assessment – Sam Quinney said he was unable to meet with Katherine Helms to discuss a process that would benefit the first purchasers. He said his thoughts are along the lines of sending out a letter of notification the beginning of January and then following up towards April or May 15th. Mr. Quinney said he believes that the Spring end date for assessment collections would work better for ginners then quarterly submitting of assessments because that would follow the South Carolina ginning season a bit better. Mr. Quinney will meet with Miss Helms and report back on this at the May meeting.
* Updates on conversations/motions & board seats of the SC Watermelon Board – Mr. Quinney said the SC Watermelon Board met in January and voted to expend the funds down. He said Mrs. Atkinson has had some ongoing discussions with the National Watermelon Promotion Board to figure out if there's a route for any funds to return back to South Carolina. Mr. Quinney said the board is moving toward dormancy.
* Joint Ag Commission/Commodity Board Meeting Update – Mr. Quinney said the original planned date of July of this year for this meeting is not a reasonable timeframe at this point to plan this meeting. There was a group discussion as to when to have this joint meeting. It was agreed to push this joint meeting to July of 2026.

**New Business**

Ellen Lloyd shared the names listed saying she has received petitions and producer verification on both the nominees for the Tobacco Board. However, she has not received petitions and producer verifications on the two watermelon board nominees.

SC Tobacco Board seats

District 2 Trenton Tyler, Loris, SC

Ben Teal, Patrick, SC

SC Watermelon Board seats

District1 Mike Sullivan, Pageland, SC

District 2OPEN SEAT, SC (Formerly held by Sandy Sanders who resigned) Brad O’Neal was nominated from the floor of board meeting held January 17, 2025

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the two nominees for the SC Tobacco Board, Trenton Tyler and Ben Teal. All were in favor. Motion carried.***  Their terms are retroactive January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027. After much discussion among board members, it was decided that Miss Lloyd would continue to reach out to the watermelon board nominees for their petitions and producer verifications and, if obtained, the board could vote on the nominees by way of email, text or mail.

***A motion was made and seconded to go into executive session to discuss the Corn and Soybean MOU status update and review and discuss motions from the November 2024 meeting and that Sam Quinney and Alden Dalton be included in the discussion. All were in favor. Motion carried.*** 10:52 a.m.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

***A motion was made and seconded to come out of Executive Session. All were in favor. Motion carried.*** 12:29 p.m.

* Chair Price noted that board member Chalmers Carr had to bow out of the meeting at 11:46 a.m. due to his speaking engagement. Chair Price thanked everyone for their input into the issues with the corn and soybean boards and said she was ready to entertain any motions that have come out of these discussions. ***A motion was made and seconded to grant exemption to the SC Soybean Board to move unencumbered reserves from the SC Department of Agriculture for investment purposes to interest bearing accounts as allowed by Federal statutes with review and annual approval of the Ag Commission and funds returned to SCDA for operational purposes as needed. All were in favor. Motion carried.***
* ***A motion was made and seconded to send a letter to the Attorney General for clarification on the actions of the SC Corn Board. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

Chair Price to work with SCDA staff to compose a letter to the SC Attorney General asking for clarity in the action of a commodity board to opt out of a state held bank account and open and operate their board’s finances from a private sector bank account. Clarification is specifically needed of Title 46-Agriculture; Chapter 17; Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act.

**Next Meeting Dates:**

The next meeting will be scheduled for the week of May 19th. Adair McKoy said he would talk with Jeff Massey, who owns Livingston’s Bulls Bay Seafood in McClellanville to see if he has room to host the Ag Commission. Mr. McKoy said they have an interesting operation. Bradley Orr to investigate a tour and lunch/meeting accommodations for the Ag Commission at the Dillon Port for the same time-period. Miss Lloyd to send out information to the group as soon as available on where the next meeting location will be.

**Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:55 p.m.