

FREESTONE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of March 22, 2016

Meeting # 0004

The Freestone County Agricultural Advisory Board met at Sam's Restaurant, 425 East I-45, Fairfield, Texas. Members present were Frank Bonner, Tim Cooper, and Marles Pace. Representing the appraisal district were Bud Black, Chief Appraiser; Don Awalt, Deputy Chief Appraiser; and John Moore, Land Appraiser. Also appraisal district employees present were Dan Ralstin, Brandon Glass, Joe Barrow, Shelly Watson, and Bobbi Shepherd.

After eating breakfast, the meeting was called to order at 7:50 a.m. and Mr. Black declared that a quorum was present. The minutes from March 24, 2015 were read and considered by the Board. Mr. Pace made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Bonner seconded the motion and motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Black then presented FCAD's Agricultural Use Intensity Standards to the board for their consideration. Mr. Black stated that these standards were the same as those approved by the board last year and no changes had been made to them. He noted that the standards did have provisions for lessened agricultural activity on properties when drought and other natural conditions require reduced stocking rates for livestock and crops.

Mr. Awalt then discussed the PTAD Farm & Ranch Survey with the board. During the discussion of this form, the following observations were made by the board regarding those questions in regard to typical Freestone County agricultural operations:

- Irrigated and dry cropland leases in the county are not typical, but the few that exist are more likely cash leases on a per acre basis;
- Improved pastureland typically leases for \$18.50 per acre and native pasture leases for \$10.00 per acre;
- Hunting leases are typically found on native and wooded tracts, with a gross income of \$7.50 per acre in additional income to the land owner (no hunting rights typically included in grazing leases);
- Property owners typically provide no management fees for hunting leases, such as hunting licenses, liability insurance or other management fees;
- Brush control is typical to the county but is the responsibility of the lessee. The property owner typically does not provide assistance in this area;
- Initial brush removal is performed by bull dozing and shredding. Chemical applications are not typical. Cost for bull dozing vary according to the type of trees and vegetation present on land. \$80.00 per hour is typical and costs of \$200 to \$750 were noted.
- After initial clearing, brush is typically controlled by shredding, at a cost of \$15.00 per acre at the lessee's expense.
- No observations regarding share leases or other cropland operations were made by the board.

Mr. Black briefly discussed with the board income and expense assumptions he used in the open space land calculation for 2016. Lease rate data for each agricultural use category are taken from Freestone Central Appraisal District's Farm and Ranch Surveys and from posted rates on USDA/NRCS websites. Hunting income may still be received by the district in a "per gun" format then converted to a "per acre" format by using the assumption of one gun per hundred acres.

After reviewing the property owner income and expense assumptions, Mr. Black then discussed the 2016 open space land calculations. He pointed the board to the tables in the calculation worksheets where the income/expense rates for 2010 through 2014 were included. He reported to the board, based upon the assumptions already discussed with the board today, the following tentative productivity values for the Post Oak Savannah:

Type	2015	2016	Change
Orchards/Truck Farms	\$202.16	\$214.90	\$12.74
Improved Pasture	\$97.12	\$106.25	\$9.13
Native Pasture	\$73.95	\$80.90	\$6.95


Mr. Black also noted that the Post Oak Savannah was considered the most typical soil type and most typical environment for grazing operations, and that a factor was applied to the Blackland Prairie and East Texas Timberland portions of the county to account for the differences in animal grazing months. These factors were determined from the USDA Soil Survey Reports for Freestone County.

The productivity value for cropland and orchards is calculated at \$214.90 per acre, an increase of \$12.74 per acre as compared to the 2015 cost per acre of \$202.16. Survey data was used to determine the average lease price as the district found no leased cropland or orchards in Freestone County.

Mr. Black reported to the board that he had not received the timber value calculations from the Property Tax Assistance Division. He stated that Freestone County has a limited amount of timber production and that not enough information was available to customize values for the county. He said that the district has relied upon PTAD's calculations for several years since they gather income/expense information from the East Texas timber producers annually.

After brief discussion, there was a motion by Mr. Cooper, seconded by Mr. Pace that Mr. Black's assumptions and calculations be approved by the board for 2016. Motion carried.


There being no further business or public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.



Frank Bonner



Tim Cooper



Marles Pace