

FREESTONE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of March 12, 2025

Meeting # 0012

The Freestone County Agricultural Advisory Board met at Sam's Restaurant, 425 East I-45, Fairfield, Texas. Members present were Scott Holmes, Frank Bonner, Brady Johnson, and Keith Hardwick. Representing the appraisal district were Don Awalt, Chief Appraiser; Jason Moore, Deputy Chief Appraiser; and Carol Clark, Administrative Assistant.

After eating breakfast, the meeting was called to order at 7:54 a.m. and Mr. Awalt declared that a quorum was present. The minutes from March 13, 2024 were read and considered by the board. Mr. Holmes made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Awalt stated that these preliminary standards had not changed since last year except for adding hemp. The animal unit for livestock is based on 1000-pound animal to meet the minimum stocking rates. Hay should typically be 1-2 cuttings per year unless there is a drought then those conditions would be considered. Timber has the same practices; there are not many orchards, vineyards and crops but may affect a handful of people.

Poultry production is still the same with chicken farms, and beekeeping is state mandated with between 6 – 12 hives and a minimum of 5 acres. Hemp must be produced for industrial use and the property owner must be licensed by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) as well as submit an annual update.

After brief discussion Mr. Awalt asked the board to recommend that there be no changes to the intensity standards. The board agreed.

Mr. Awalt continued his presentation by reviewing the 2025 Open Space Land Value Calculations that was included in the board's packet. The page of the booklet had a report of how the agricultural use in the county was distributed into acreage. There were 412,527 acres of pasturelands, 37,455 acres of wildlife management, 15,061 acres of timberlands, and there were a total of 536 acres of cropland/orchards.

The fence costs on page 44 was based on an average tract size of 39 acres. The life expectancy of a fence is 20 years with the materials and labor costs of 3.25 per linear feet. Mr. Awalt stated that 2.96 per linear feet was used in 2023. The fencing cost and taxes were normally the responsibility of the property owner. During a brief discussion Mr. Holmes stated that wire fencing was about \$100 per roll and t-posts were \$6 each. Labor costs were approximately \$1.50 per foot. The capitalization rate for ag use is 10 percent.

Mr. Awalt reviewed Section 2-*Open Space Land Cost Schedule Development* pointing out that between 2019 and 2023 improved pasture lease amount was \$20 with a Net Income to Land between \$11.20 and \$11.78. The average net lease price is \$11.39. The average net income to land divided by a 10 % cap rate gives a productivity value of \$113.93 per acre. Native pasture was \$12 between 2019 and 2023 with a productivity value of \$108.93 using \$10.89 average net income to land and a 10 % cap rate. Adjusted for soil capacity and location for 2025, wooded pastureland had a productivity value for Blackland Prairie of \$84.53. East Texas Timberland is \$79.30, and Post Oak Savannah is \$87.14. Orchards had a lease amount of \$30 with a net income to land of \$25.68 and a productivity value of \$256.80 per acre. Mr. Awalt pointed out the last three pages of the report that pine prices had decreased and remained at a cap rate of 10 % the same as 2023.

The Texas Rural Land Value Trends 2023 showed that the district is representative of the rental ranges typical for Region 7. Improved pasture had a rental range of \$15 to \$30. Open and wooded native pasture had a rental range of \$7 to \$15. Mr. Awalt pointed out the agriculture land cap rates of 10.60 for 2024 and 10.00 for 2025.

There being no further business or public comment, the meeting adjourned at 8:18 a.m.

Frank Bonner

Brady Johnson

Barry Capps

Scott Holmes

Keith Hardwick