



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

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Vote to approve the NC State Extension Memorandum of Agreement between the Board of County Commissioners Chatham County and North Carolina State University.

Introduction/Background: North Carolina State Extension (NC State Extension) was established as a part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences of North Carolina State University (NCSU) by federal and state legislation for the specific purpose of “extending” the educational services of the University to the people of the state, on subjects related to agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community and rural development.

The primary purpose of Cooperative Extension is to provide the people of North Carolina with the most current and relevant unbiased research-based information - particularly that which is related to strengthening the economy through profitable, sustainable and safe food, forest and green industry systems; protecting the environment and natural resources; and empowering youth and families to lead healthier lives and become community leaders. These purposes are furthered by Cooperative Extension employees who are charged with carrying out the extension education programs of the universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Cooperative Extension has sufficient flexibility to permit attention to the special problems, needs, and interests of the citizens and leadership in each county. Therefore, the programmatic, personnel, and funding complement reflects the unique needs of each county. County Advisory Councils are consulted on a regular basis to assist in prioritizing the county educational program content. Program clientele or recipients of services include individuals, families, communities, municipalities, agricultural and seafood processing and marketing firms, other businesses and certain organizations. These services are delivered to adults and youth in both urban and rural settings.

To assure that educational programs offered by Cooperative Extension meet the needs of the local clientele, it is important that both elected and appointed decision makers at each level of government understand their respective responsibilities and relationships in conducting and funding this work. To this end, this Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will detail the individual relationships and mutually agreed- upon responsibilities of NCSU and each county or tribal community that signs this Memorandum of Agreement.

Discussion/Analysis: The prior agreement between Chatham County and NCSU was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and last approved by the Board in 2006. In 2006 the MOU was between NCSU, NC A&T, and Chatham County. The new MOA is only between NCSU and Chatham County; NC A&T now processes a separate MOA with the county, and the MOA is done on a per employee basis.

NCSU began working on this revised document last year and has released it in recognition of NC A&T now having its own separate document and to provide clarification in certain areas that were previously unclear - in particular, authorizing counties to offer salary adjustments above and beyond

those provided for by the State.

As with the earlier MOU approved by the county, the proposed MOA maintains Chatham's designation as a "locked-in" county. This status is the county's assurance that it will remain committed to its portion of salary splits between North Carolina and the county when pay adjustments are made by the state.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan: The work Chatham's Extension Office consistently engages with speaks to many aspects of Plan Chatham, Chatham County's Comprehensive Plan. The preservation of rural character, and the protection and enabling of agricultural activity in the county are captured within the first two objectives noted in Plan Chatham. Furthermore, the diversification of the county's tax base, becoming more resilient, and fostering healthy communities are also specifically identified objectives within the Comprehensive Plan. From Extension's work with farmers on best practices to increase sustainable business and environmentally friendly commercial and family farming operations, the education of Chatham's youth through program offerings with 4-H, to providing beekeeping classes; NCSU's partnership with the county through its Extension office in Chatham promote many of the values and goals advanced through Plan Chatham.

Budgetary Impact: The proposed MOA represents no budgetary impact greater than what the current MOU in place with NCSU, with the exception of the proposed MOA makes it clear that the county has the ability to fund Extension employees' salaries higher than what the annual State salary adjustments. Should the county, from time to time, choose to exercise this authority, the budgetary impact will be realized in those future and subsequent fiscal years. However, the proposed MOA does not require the county to take on this additional cost.

Recommendation: Approve the NC State Extension Memorandum of Agreement between the Board of County Commissioners Chatham County and North Carolina State University.