

Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources Subcommittee Meeting
Meeting #2 – 04-18-2026
Meeting Notes

Attendees:

- Catherine Huston
- Maria Hanson
- Tessa Cunningham
- Johnathan Cunningham
- Chip Denton
- Allison Duncan
- Will Duncan
- Laurie Searle
- Greg Ramsey
- BreeAnne Clowdus
- Brandi Whitney
- John Whitney
- Lily Rolader
- Steve Nygren

The Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources subcommittee met for the second time on Saturday, April 18, 2026 from 11:00am – 12:00pm at City Hall. The group participated in a facilitated discussion on multiple topics, including agricultural challenges and constraints, and potential solutions.

1. Agricultural Challenges and Constraints

- Participants identified the high cost of land and elevated property taxes as major barriers to maintaining and expanding agricultural operations.
- Availability of suitable farmland was noted as a challenge, with distinctions made between areas suitable for growing crops, fruits, and vegetables, vs. areas suitable for livestock.
- It was noted that approximately 77% of farm income comes from off-farm sources (sources not directly related to growing or selling crops or livestock), prompting farmers to pursue supplemental uses such as agritourism or bed-and-breakfasts to remain viable.
- High costs associated with animal processing and limited local processing capacity were identified as significant barriers.
- Limited customer base and market access, including constraints at the Serenbe market, were cited as challenges to sustaining full farmstands.

2. Revenue Diversification and Market Opportunities

- Mixed-revenue opportunities were discussed, including farm stores or shared sales locations where multiple farmers could sell products together.
- Restaurants were noted as increasingly interested in sourcing local farm products.
- Participants suggested forming a working group of local restaurants and farmers to identify ways to make purchasing local products easier and more consistent.
- It was emphasized that on-farm visitation and agritourism generate some of the strongest revenue opportunities for farmers.

3. Agricultural Uses, Permitting, and Regulations

- It was noted that food processing and production uses require a special use permit and a minimum 10-acre lot.
- It was noted that agricultural retail uses and roadside stands require a special administrative permit.
- A 10-acre minimum lot size for agritourism was discussed as a means to prevent purely commercial enterprises and ensure uses remain agriculture-focused.
- Participants discussed allowing lighter forms of agritourism to provide greater flexibility for farmers.
- Use of federal farm identification numbers was noted as a potential way to verify legitimate farming operations.

4. Potential Solutions and Support Tools

- Participants discussed several potential approaches to improving agricultural viability:
 - Labor sharing and cooperative models
 - Affordable housing options for farm workers
 - Providing support with permitting and grant applications, including having a liaison to guide farmers through these processes
 - Educational resources explaining how to open and operate a farmstand in Chattahoochee Hills
- Farm trusts were discussed as a tool to purchase land and place it under conservation easement in order to reduce long-term land costs for agricultural use.

5. Processing, Infrastructure, and Shared Resources

- A centralized commercial kitchen was identified as a potential “game changer” that could support food processing, attract farmers, and strengthen the local food system.
- A previously proposed commercial kitchen site behind the school was referenced, with discussion shifting toward funding and grant opportunities to implement it.
- Some churches were noted as having certified commercial kitchens that may be underutilized.
- A potential farmers market at Hutchinson Ferry was discussed, though participants noted challenges related to limited population and farm participation.
- Participants suggested that better coordination among farmers on crop planning could help ensure product diversity, though it was acknowledged that farming communities can be highly individualistic.
- The need to identify locations where agricultural resources could be centralized was raised.

6. Agricultural Identity, Mapping, and Governance

- Participants discussed creating a map of local farms to support tourism and provide resources to the Convention and Visitor Bureau.
- The idea of positioning Chattahoochee Hills as an agriculturally friendly hub or innovation zone was raised.
- Formation of an Agricultural Commission or local food systems group was discussed, with references to similar models in other communities.
- Additional ideas included infrastructure overlay mapping, deer coolers, and broader farmer asset mapping.

7. Next Steps for Agricultural Strategy

- Participants emphasized the need for a broader, citywide agricultural strategy.
- Discussion included clarifying what the City can do directly versus how other communities have supported agriculture.
- Creating an agricultural committee and homesteaders committee was suggested as a way to encourage shared resources and facilitate knowledge-sharing between established farmers and homesteaders

8. Public Space and Greenspace Considerations

- Participants identified several gaps in public space and greenspace amenities, including:
 - Additional bike lanes
 - Potential amphitheater space in Serenbe
 - RiverLands Park includes a space that can function as an amphitheater
 - Coordinating with the City of Palmetto on recreational access at the Hutchinson Ferry reservoir, including walking or kayaking
 - Lack of a group shelter at Cochran Mill Park
- There was interest in adding closed group shelters and increasing park programming.
- The role of a Park Commission was discussed as a way to improve and activate existing park spaces.
- Participants expressed support for gravel roads as part of the broader trail network.

Overall Takeaways

- Farming in Chattahoochee Hills faces significant economic and land-related challenges.
- Revenue diversification is essential to agricultural sustainability.
- Regulatory flexibility and clearer support systems could meaningfully help farmers.
- Shared infrastructure and collaborative models could be transformative.
- A more coordinated agricultural strategy and governance structure is needed.