

Business Office Manager Fran Sonnenberg was also present. Howard Baker was absent.

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 pm by Vice-President Bedford.

A quorum was established.

Lanette Fletcher moved that the 2020 tax rate be set at \$0.350057

per \$100 evaluation. Jerita Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Lanette Fletcher moved that the meeting be adjourned and Gina McCutchen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:04 pm.

Growing Texas population means a loss of working lands

Texas is changing and growing, but is all change good?

As the Lone Star State's population continues to grow, its farm and ranch acres are disappearing.

The land isn't gone, but its use is.

Texas lost about 2.2 million acres of working lands from 1997-2017, according to data from the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute. The rate of conversion accelerated in the last five-year period, with over 1.2 million acres lost during that time.

"That's a staggering loss for Texas farmers, ranchers and forestland owners," John Ross Copeland, Coke County Farm Bureau president, said. "That's a lot of people, homes, shopping centers, restaurants, stores and more. We're losing our working agricultural land at a fast rate."

The surging population growth and years of strong economic activity are the main factors for working land conversion.

Population growth increases land values and markets, creating incentives for landowners to subdivide and sell their land. As ownership sizes decrease, the likelihood of maintaining a profit with

traditional farming, ranching and forestry uses also decreases, facilitating the conversion of working lands to non-agricultural uses.

That conversion is expected to continue.

By 2050, the Lone Star State is projected to have more than 40 million residents, according to the Texas Demographic Center.

"We need to keep our farmers, ranchers and forestry owners on the land to grow our food, help conserve water, preserve wildlife habitat and manage our natural resources," John Ross said. "Keeping farmers and ranchers on the land is good for the land and it's good for Texas."

Agriculture is no stranger to technology

by Jennifer Dorsett
Texas Farm Bureau

When it comes to farming and ranching, many people often envision overall-clad men with a reluctance to embrace technology, content to be left alone in the countryside with their livestock and old machinery.

But that stereotype couldn't be further from the truth.

Farmers are well-educated, experienced and technologically-savvy.

The technological advancements over the past several years have helped make farming and ranching even more sustainable.

Hydrology, engineering, technical and mechanical design and more are at the heart of everyday activities on farms and ranches across the nation.

And today, farmers grow even more while using less.

Thanks in large part to Dr. Norman Borlaug, agriculture entered a "Green Revolution" in the mid-20th Century.

Plant breeding achieved new

heights, with Borlaug and others developing new wheat varieties. These more drought-tolerant and pest-resistance strains showed the possibilities of improving crop production through plant genetics.

Fast-forward to 1982, Monsanto created the first-ever genetically-modified plant cells. About 15 years later, the company created the first genetically-modified cotton and soybean technology, paving the way for more desired traits that lead to increased yields while requiring fewer inputs, such as pest-control tools.

It's pretty amazing to consider

that farmers and ranchers were embracing cutting-edge gene therapy nearly 20 years before the technology went mainstream in medical applications.

Increased water use efficiency is another major technological advancement made by farmers and ranchers, long before cities began enacting water conservation plans and creating more efficient plumbing standards in building codes.

From carrying buckets of water and flood-row irrigation to micro-drip and subground techniques, farmers have made big strides in getting water to crops, while using less overall and losing less to evaporation.

(Continued on next page)

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