



Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority

Office of Community Development
600 North Main Street, Suite 107
Woodstock, VA 22664

www.shenandoahcountyva.us/committees/cea

MEETING MINUTES

February 4, 2015; 9:00 AM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Co-Chairperson Dee Hockman
Leon Smith, Doug French, and Supervisor Steve Baker

Others Present: Jed Rau, Brandon Davis and Crystal Copenhaver

Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order by Chairperson Watkinson at 9:00 a.m.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the CEA meeting on December 3, 2014 were approved as amended.

Update on Upcoming Pleasantdale Easement Stewardship Visit

Mr. Davis stated Abby Kennedy, VOF reached out stating there is a scheduled stewardship meeting with the Hawkins Pleasantdale Farm, on Tuesday, February 24th at 1 p.m. The visit has been coordinated with Wade Hawkins, landowner, and with NRCS conservationist Brent Barribeau. The County (represented by Brandon Davis) will meet at the same time to ensure the terms of the agreement are being met. VOF will lead the meeting.

Update on the County Planner Hiring Process

Mr. Davis stated Mr. Patrick Felling accepted the position of Director of Solid Waste for Shenandoah County. Mr. Davis will facilitate the CEA committee meetings until the new Planner is hired. It is hoped to get someone that is educated in this field (easements). There have been approximately twenty applications submitted. Hopefully the position will be filled by April.

Chairperson Watkinson offered to train the new planner on easements if needed.

Review CEA Goal-Setting Conclusions for 2015

Postponed, will be topic of discussion at the next CEA meeting.

Discuss Active 2015 General Assembly Legislation

Mr. Davis stated Kim Woodwell gave an update via email correspondence on general assembly legislation which they are working on now and asked if we would be interested in reaching out to these people. Members were provided copies of the correspondence and the language on the first bill HB1488-H1 2015 fiscal impact statement, which is believed this bill will pass as is. The bigger issue, there may be a reduction in the cap on the maximum amount of tax credits per year reducing if from \$100 million to \$75 million. This savings was supposed to be allocated into the land protection grant program, but VOF is advocating to have this money reallocated to their operating budget. If this happens, the amount of money available to landowners to help with easement costs would be basically eliminated or reduced and have significant impact on future easements in the county and valley.

Chairperson Watkinson stated the HB1488-H-1 bill will have VOF do the judicial review when landowners have complaints or issues with easements instead of having it go through the Court system (which it currently goes through now). VOF will be responsible. VOF will not be able to preserve more land with the allocated funds; VOF will be able to hire attorneys.

CEA would like to voice concerns via letters when it is a bill that will specifically affect PDR programs, programs CEA work through with conservation and the state. Chairman Watkinson will draft letters for committee review and comment before forwarding submission.

Other Business

Jed Rau stated he has received grant monies to use for education. He would like to put together some neighborhood dinners if anyone on the committee would like to participate. The committee members welcomed this idea and volunteered to participate.

The next CEA meeting is scheduled for March 4th.

Meeting Adjourned