



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

May 1 2013; 4:00-6:00 PM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Supervisor Dennis Morris, Planning Commissioner Leon Smith, Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Dee Hockman and Bud Griswold

Others Present: Patrick Felling, Kim Woodwell and Crystal Copenhaver

Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order by Chairperson Kelly Watkinson at 4:00 p.m. with an overview of the agenda.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the CEA meeting on April 3, 2013 were approved as presented.

Discussion/Vote on the Hawkins Farm Easements Proposal

Mr. Felling presented an overview of North & South Easements, noting the size of the tracts, their farm use, and road frontage. He also highlighted the prevalence of prime soils and soils of statewide importance. Mr. Felling presented the benefits the County would receive from the easements, including preservation of a working family farm, protection of local water resources, and implementation of the County's goal of sending residential development toward the towns while preserving the rural areas. Additionally, the easements would be an investment in the County's leading business sector. Mr. Felling finished his presentation by summarizing the easement restrictions.

It was noted that there are two potential home sites marked out on the North tract, but only one single family dwelling may be constructed within a designated homestead site. The Hawkins family plans to fence out the ponds and waterway in the North tract with the help of federal funding. It is not specifically stated in the Conservation Plan that this is a requirement of the easement. CEA members discussed the possibility of requiring riparian buffers and other Best Management Practices (BMPs) on eased lands. Chmn. Watkinson explained how easements are designed to specify restrictions on how the property can be used, not as a tool for day-to-day land management. Another complicating factor is that BMPs may be adjusted depending on landowner goals. Chmn. Watkinson suggested asking Mike Liskey to attend a CEA meeting to explain how BMPs are set to better understand how an easement could impact which BMPs are chosen and implemented.

The easement restrictions on the North and South tracts are the same. With no additional discussion about the easements, Leon made a motion to approve the North and South easements. Bud seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The next step is for the easements to go to the BOS for consideration. Supervisor Morris suggested going before the BOS with a presentation at the May 14th day meeting and then schedule a BOS vote on May 28th. The May 28th meeting would also allow for public comment. Mr. Felling will present to the BOS an official request to vote on the easement. Supervisor Morris indicated it would be appropriate for CEA members to attend the meeting and make comments.

Ramp Up Easement Outreach

Discussion started with a suggestion to contact other counties to find out how they educate their communities and overcome misperceptions about easements. CEA meetings are open to public, and CEA minutes are posted on the Shenandoah County web page. The County website lacks detailed conservation easement information, and that should be addressed. The idea was floated of including an outreach flyer in tax bill mailings.

Develop Plan to Raise PDR Funding

It was suggested that instead of doing a broad based bulk mailing, a more direct approach to individuals interested in agriculture might be more effective. Outreach and fundraising could be combined together in a newsletter. They could be distributed via Farmers Markets, Co-ops, Tractor Supply stores and/or other local businesses. Another idea to outreach, may be approach local magazines to see if they are willing publish articles, possibly the Farm Bureau magazine, Shenandoah Coop magazine or Bryce Courier. This would advertise the message and educate without spending funds.

An awesome message was presented from 2010 slide on Farm Land Trust. Mrs. Woodwell will ask Mike Haines if he can email the slide show to Mr. Felling for ideas. Simple, but educational information goes a long way. Mr. Felling will put together a chart to show what it actual cost localities for residential vs. farm property. Clarke County seems to have a successful easement program, and it is believed that they do not put a lot of money into easements. Mr. Felling will do further research into their program and how they make it work. Other suggestions were made for non-traditional outreach:

- Adding an option on the tax bill to make a voluntary donation to CEA program. Mr. Felling will check whether this can be done.
- Bike race fundraiser
- Host benefit dinner
- Legacy program, where residents add the CEA to their wills
- Sponsorship, people donate who believe in the cause
- Allocate one cent of tax revenue for CEA

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- Add information to Shenandoah County web page include legacy program, newsletter, CEA brochure

Future funding beyond the current \$100,000 allocation will be critical for the authority to keep moving forward successfully with the easement program.

Other Business

The Supervisors have yet to vote on the change in easement ordinance to make the BOS third-party enforcers on all CEA easements. No public comment was made at the public hearing and the BOS is scheduled vote on the ordinance change on May 14th.

Mr. Felling may move the June meeting scheduled for June 5th to another date, as Chmn. Watkinson will be unable to attend the June 5th meeting. It was noted that there are no BOS meetings for the month of July. CEA members agreed to cancel the CEA meeting for the month of July.

Meeting Adjourned