



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

June 4, 2014; 9:00-11:00 AM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Supervisor Steven Baker, Doug French, Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Bud Griswold, and Vice-Chairperson Dee Hockman, Leon Smith, and Cindy Dellinger

Others Present: Patrick Felling, Jed Rau, Bobby Clark, and Crystal Copenhaver

Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order by Vice-Chairperson Hockman at 9:00 a.m.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the CEA meeting on May 7, 2014 were approved as presented.

Easement Program Updates

a. Pleasantdale Farm Easements

The easements on the Hawkins Farm officially closed on May 15th. The County put up \$200,000 (including \$100,000 to be reimbursed by VDACS).

b. Winkelman Property

Mr. Felling stated the landowner made a request to have his property taxes forgiven for 3-4 years, but mechanism to accomplish this was not found. The landowner is now willing to donate the easement outright. Since the easement is donated, a score sheet is not required. Mr. Felling prepared one for CEA consideration, scoring approximately 15 points. The parcel shows no prime soils, is not in Ag and Forestal District, and is not a working farm. The potential benefits to the County for this property being in easement include significant frontage on Cedar Creek which could form a wooded stream if under easement. The property currently does not have a forest management plan. Mr. Rau stated it does not qualify for the Potomac Conservancy program. The property is a potential small link to connect to surrounding easements. It is not known if the landowner has approached any surrounding landowners to put together a larger piece. Chairperson Watkinson stated some pros: baseline documentation simple, minimal legal costs, another easement for the authority, could serve to encourage neighbors to consider easements, and value of the forest protecting the stream. Some cons: small parcel, a lot of work to steward. Chairperson Watkinson would recommend a restrictive

easement that would require minimal County involvement; strict, straight and simple. Mr. Felling asked if this was a project the authority would like to pursue even though it would be a small easement. Mr. Griswold and Mrs. Dellinger both agreed, there are too many draw backs at this time, but felt it was worthwhile for him to check with other landowners to see if they are interested in being a part of an easement. Mr. French suggested giving the landowner reasons why the authority is not ready to consider the easement at this time. Mr. Felling agreed to talk with the landowners.

c. Tisinger Farm

Mr. Felling stated this is project has not been before the authority, but wanted them to be informed. The Tisinger Family has approached the County several times about an easement. There has been no discussion about who would hold the easement (Potomac Conservancy would require trees). The parcel is in an area designated for annexation by Mt. Jackson, per an agreement with the County. Thus, an easement proposal while in the County conflicts with the current Comprehensive Plan (and with the annexation agreement). The landowners would like to put an easement on the property before they sell it. The property is along US RT11; 60% of the parcel is located in the flood plain. Mr. Felling stated he recently talked with the Mt. Jackson Planning Commission. The scenario the Mt. Jackson Planning Commission would like is development along US RT11, leaving the bulk of the property for an easement, and allow public access to the river. Co-Chairperson Hockman inquired if there was a timeline for the river walk to be completed. Mr. Felling stated the Tisinger's have no timeline, but they do not want to be forgotten and there has been no indication they want funding or payment. Chairperson Watkinson stated the property would be a great tie in for a recreational area for the Town of Mt. Jackson. Mrs. Dellinger and Supervisor Baker both stated they would not like to see the property developed along US RT 11. The general thought of the CEA, it would be a good project for the Town of Mt. Jackson. Mr. Rau expressed interest in the town's response.

d. County Farm Options

Mr. Felling has been unable to find any easement funding options for the County Farm; for the County to be able to recoup the easement value. Chairperson Watkinson suggested checking into the availability of Transportation Enhancement funding.

Survey of PRD Funding Sources in Other Jurisdictions

Mr. Felling stated Carroll County Maryland has budgeted \$25 million over the next 5 years for their easement program. They mainly use general obligation bonds for PDR

allocation. Mr. Clark felt these bonds were complicated. Mr. Felling stated they also use land transfer fees. Lancaster, PA uses bonds and general funds. Mr. Felling would like to do a more thorough presentation to lay out the various options other jurisdictions use for their funding sources. Most counties are willing to allocate money toward easement programs. Mrs. Dellinger stated from her real estate experience, many of her calls are from clients wanting to buy farms. She also stated vineyard property is in very high demand. Mr. Griswold inquired about the selling price per acre of farmland. Mrs. Dellinger replied \$3000 - \$4,000.00, up to \$6,000.00 for crop land.

Consider Proposal Dedicating Roll-Back Tax Collections to the Easement Program

Mr. Felling presented the annual rollback tax collection and reserve balance charts. Co-Chairperson Hockman asked that the future roll-back taxes be dedicated to the easement program. Supervisor Baker felt any request should be postponed until the County receives their state budget, all members were in favor of postponing this request.

Other Business

Vice-chairperson Hockman presented a Shenandoah County Agriculture and Farm Guide brochure recently printed by the Shenandoah Forum. Everyone liked the brochure and felt it was very informative, they would like to distribute the brochure with easement applications.

The next CEA meeting is scheduled for August 6th.

Meeting Adjourned