



# Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority

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

[www.shenandoahcountyva.us/committees/cea](http://www.shenandoahcountyva.us/committees/cea)

---

## MEETING MINUTES

June 18, 2013; 4:00-6:00 PM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Planning Commissioner Leon Smith, Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Dee Hockman, Cindy Dellinger and Doug French

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 May 1, 2013 were approved as presented.

### Update on the Pleasantdale Farm Easements

Mr. Felling gave an update on the Pleasantdale Farm Easements. The draft deed of easement was based on an old survey, and a new survey has been completed. The deed will be edited to reflect the new survey information, and a removal of all interior lot lines. The result will be a single parcel for the north easement, and one parcel for the south.

The CEA will invite the Hawkins' to submit an offer letter for the easements, per the County easement ordinance. The invitation letter will be reviewed by the CEA before sending it out. It was noted that closing is not expected for several months due to staff shortages at NRCS which have created a back log for easement review.

The stream buffers planned for the farm are not likely to be installed before closing on the easements. The buffers are required by the easement, and so closing the easement creates a mandate for their timely completion.

### Presentation of Potential Easement on 90-Acre Farm near Columbia Furnace

Mr. Felling noted that people are expressing interest in easements. There was some interest from a land owner near the Columbia Furnace area that would like the CEA to review their property for placement in an easement. The property is summarized as follows:

- 90 acre farm
- 7 parcels (including a 0.5 acre parcel with a home)
- 6 tracts of property zoned Agriculture

- 
- 1 large tract zoned Conservation
  - 9 potential subdivision lots at maximum allowed
  - Road access to the residential parcel only
  - Little prime soils on the property
  - Some property in the flood zone
  - Easement value unknown. Assessed value unknown, no appraisal conducted
  - Initial Easement Eligibility Criteria score of 16

The owners at this time are hesitant to spend funds to get an appraisal; they wanted to get an idea from CEA for consideration first. It was decided inform the homeowners that they meet the minimum requirement for CEA to consider the property for an easement. Being at the minimum, it may or may not be selected. At this time CEA has no funds to leverage for this property. No easement purchase funds will be available unless/until the Board of Supervisors allocates additional funding.

Chairman Watkinson suggested that there be one or two open enrollment periods per year for property owners to submit applications for easement consideration. A fall deadline for closing of an initial enrollment period was suggested, possibly near the end of October. This time frame was suggested to coincide with VDACS fund matching. Donated easements can be done anytime during the year; they will not be limited to the open enrollment period as they will not require funding. Cindy moved to approve a October 31, 2013 deadline; Dee seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor.

### **Update on CEA Outreach and Fundraising**

Dee noted the importance of educating residents about conservation easements, including the potential financial benefits for estates. Mr. Felling will check to see when of tax bills and land use bills are mailed out, and also if CEA would be able to include outreach information with these bills. Mr. Felling expressed the view that CEA may be able to include outreach information with the bills, but perhaps not a donation request. Chairman Watkinson would like to push getting together an outreach flyer that could be included with the October mailing. Chairman Watkinson stated the CEA should partner with other organizations that do mailings; reaching out to them to help spread the word. Chairman Watkinson asked Mr. Felling to update the current CEA flyer, adding ways to contribute funds. Members were assigned to distribute the flyers to: Farm Bureau, Valley Conservation Council, Shenandoah County Farming Association, Massanutten Association of Realtors, Harrisonburg / Rockingham Association of Realtors, Mid Atlantic Farm Credit, Livestock & Poultry Exchange, Lord Fairfax Soil & Water Conservation, DOF (Joe Lehnen), Extension Office (Bobby Clark), Press Release to local newspapers (check to see if interested in writing local articles), Rockingham Co-Op, Southern States, local tax preparers, local attorneys, Shenandoah County Bar Association and NRCS (Mike Liskey). Mr. Felling will send the updated flyer to CEA members for distribution.

---

CEA would like to keep all Authority funds in the County system and under County control. There is no interest in CEA maintaining a separate account. It was stated that no additional PDR funds will be requested from the BOS until all current PDR funds are depleted (i.e. after the Hawkins' easements close).

### **Discussion of Costs to Localities from Various Land Uses**

There was a study completed showing the cost to localities for residential land use versus agriculture land. Results as follows:

- For every \$1.00 of revenue received from residential property it cost localities roughly \$1.30 - \$1.50 to provide services to those households.
- For every \$1.00 of revenue received from agriculture property it cost localities on the order of 25-50 cents to provide services.

The study does not distinguish between properties near to town versus those farther away. Residential expansion away from the towns increases costs (roads, buses, emergency services, facilities) over homes near population centers. Mr. Felling will email to members information from Mike Haines 2010 slide on Farm Land Trust.

### **Review County Development Plans and Potential**

Mr. Felling referred to a County map showing the number of vacant parcels that had potential for development and what impact that would have on the County.

- There are nearly 10,000 vacant parcels in the County under 20 (twenty) acres in size, of which 2/3 have direct road access or right of way to the property
- There are over 1,000 platted lots (preapproved for homes) in the towns
- The existing supply of small parcels is estimated to provide sufficient lots for 30 years of residential growth
- Only 1.5% of the County (approximately 5,000 acres) is under conservation easement
- There is considerable room for growth in land conservation in the County without raising concern for it impacting the supply future residential land

### **Other Business**

No CEA meeting in July. The next meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2013.

*Meeting Adjourned*