



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

August 7, 2013; 4:00-6:00 PM

Board Conference Room

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

Others Present: Patrick Felling, Denman Zirkle, Bobby Clark 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 June 18, 2013 to be corrected with members present name change, approved as amended.

Proposal to Co-Hold Easement on Island Farm

a. Proposal Briefing

Mr. Felling gave an overview of Island Farm, a map was provided of the area. The land to the north and east is in Warren County. Cedar Creek forms the boundary on the east, and there is an intermittent stream in an oxbow of Cedar Creek as well. Cedar Creek and Bell Grove National Park is to the east of this property. Just to the north of the property is another conservation easement land, Carolyn Stalnaker's property. Bud asked if this property is outside of the Strasburg growth area. Pat indicated it is inside of Strasburg Town currently and they are supportive of this easement. Currently there are two access roads into the property. Bobby asked about the property being in a floodplain. Leon stated that Cedar Creek comes through and out to the Shenandoah River. In the 1996 flood there was a lot of water coming through the property, when the Shenandoah River overflowed and started backing up into Cedar Creek. A portion of the area was completely underwater, up to 15 feet high. Water no longer goes there except during flooding. Bud asked if the property was all in the FEMA floodplain. Pat stated a portion of the property is not. Bud asked how this property relates to others

that are located in the floodplain, since being in floodplain is it unlikely that it will be built on, and we should support other properties that have potential to be developed. Leon stated this property is currently platted through the Town of Strasburg and has an approved site plan for the development of 229 homes. Construction could occur on this property. Mr. Zirkle stated the property is zoned R2. —The conservation easement would allow only one home. Pat gave an overview of easement ranking criteria for the tract:

- Prime soils: 174 acres
- Conservation plan with stream buffers and nutrient management
- 1,000 ft of Cedar Creek frontage

Mr. Denman Zirkle reviewed a timeline of the project starting in 2002 through 2013. The Battlefield Foundation is interested in the property due to its Civil War historical values, and its proximity to other nearby important properties. Shenandoah County and Strasburg Town leaders expressed support for the project. After extensive efforts by SVBF to raise funds (including from the County and the Town), all of the purchase money was raised. A recent appraisal of the property indicates a significant increase in fair market value, raising the easement purchase price. Those additional funds have been located, leaving the easement negotiation with the state Department of Historic Resources as the final piece. There is ~~an~~ urgency to closing the deal, ~~due~~ due to bank loan pressure. If the DHR cannot come to agreement in time, then SVBF would like the County to consider stepping in to be a co-holder.

b. Decide Level of CEA Interest

Mr. Morris stated we need to time to deal with the issues that are confronting us. Cindy applauds the efforts of Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, stating they have done an incredible job in putting this together at this level. The property is beautiful and is threatened by development. Kelley states it is pretty amazing, it is basically an investment and all of the state and federal funds in preserving this piece of property in Shenandoah County. Mr. Morris states this property has enough merit for us to do what we can to keep the project moving forward.

Update on Previously Approved -Easement Projects

The Vance farm easement has officially closed. The Hawkins easement deeds have still not been finalized and sent to NRCS for review. That could happen in the next 1-2 months.

Review Offer Letter to the Hawkins Family

Mr. Felling distributed an “Invitation and Offer Letter” for CEA approval. All present endorsed the letter for Chair Watkinson to sign, which she did. The return deadline for the letter was set at August 30th.

Status of Open Enrollment

Mr. Felling distributed an updated CEA brochure with the application period shown, and well as instructions for donating to the program. Chair Watkinson expressed a concern that an October closing for applications would be too soon. Mrs. Dellinger suggested aligning the deadline with the County land use form deadline, set for December 5th. All were in agreement with this proposal.

Other Business

The next meeting is scheduled for September 4, 2013.

Meeting Adjourned