



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

November 5, 2014; 9:00-11:00 AM

Board Conference Room

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

Others Present: Patrick Felling, Jed Rau, Bobby Clark, 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 October 1, 2014 were not available for approval.

Easement Stewardship Update

Mr. Felling and Mr. Rau have a meeting scheduled with the Vance's, Island Ford Farm, on Friday, November 7th to put together a plan for funding assistance to help get the buffer completed in a timely manner and also ideas for vegetated buffer management.

Members suggested putting together a memo "policy statement" for the Vance file stating the fence along the North Fork is in compliance as it existed at the time the easement closed; and that when major portions of the fence are replaced, the minimum buffer distance be set at 35 feet.

Linkages between the Agriculture Industry, the Economy and Easements

Mr. Davis stated there is a close connection between the goals of the CEA and the vision for the County as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The vision calls for the rural resources of the county (e.g. agricultural, historic and natural) be preserved, and that development be encouraged in and around the towns. The CEA was established to provide a targeted tool to achieve that preservation of key rural lands. The CEA should pursue easements in a targeted way to achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

There is also a close linkage between the CEA's work and economic development in the county. The largest economic sector in the county is agriculture, with food products,

manufacturing, processing, storage, and distribution dominating our economy. Shenandoah Valley was known as the bread basket of the south, and in a way, we still are.

Mr. Davis and Mr. Clark went through a list of over 25 large county businesses that are directly or closely related to agriculture. Our industry is *food*, without agriculture the dominate food industries would not be here. The many farms in the area created the environment for these industries to grow and thrive. If that critical mass of farms went away, there would be nothing to tie those business to our county, and they may very well move elsewhere and take the jobs with them. Mr. Clark noted that if we chip away at the farmland base, we will lose those agricultural jobs. Mr. Davis stated that County government strives to be farm friendly, and the easement program is one of those efforts.

Chairperson Watkinson inquired how to make the connection with businesses to discuss how the easement program directly affects their businesses. Mr. Davis stated when you talk with private sector, their goals are to make money, target your message, you are a small piece of it, figure out how what you do makes them money and have one on one conversations.

Mr. Clark felt the CEA has been doing a good job and people are noticing. He encouraged them to stay the course.

CEA wishes to continue reaching out to various County committees to engage, educate, promote enabling a positive message to gain continued support of easements.

Set CEA Goals for 2015

Mr. Felling provided a copy of the 2010 CEA Strategic Plan.

Mr. Griswold opened the discussion stating the original CEA members thought the program was a good idea, supported it and wanted it to work. No members were farmers, but interested to bring goals from the Comprehensive Plan. Outside folks were brought in for input, to help educate ourselves so we could educate the BOS & PC. Terms of objectives and strategies are things that we continue to strive toward.

A lengthy discussion ensued and the following goals were recommended for 2015:

- Construct a complete inventory of eased properties in the county
- Improve internal County controls for land development activities on eased properties
- Complete the update to the easement program ordinance
- Emphasize the targeted nature of easement to be held by CEA (based on ordinance scoring system)

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- Develop a marketing strategy for the easement program that will include:
 - Summarize great aspects of the county and show how CEA works to support/preserve those things
 - Reach out to various County committees to engage re: easements (e.g. PC, WRAC, Tourism, etc.)
 - Craft messages for specific industries
 - Develop a running list of external partners to meet with re: linkages to easements (e.g. Farm Bureau, Shenandoah Forum, Appalachian Freight, Business Roundtable, etc.)

Other Business

Mr. Felling stated several of the Conservation Easement Authority appointment terms would be expiring December 2014. Mr. Griswold will not be renewing his term. Suggestions are open for someone who may be interested in filling this vacancy.

The next CEA meeting is scheduled for December 3rd.

Meeting Adjourned