



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 4, 2015; 9:00 AM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Co-Chairperson Dee Hockman, Doug French, and Cindy Dellinger

Others Present: Garrett Morgan, Brenna Menefee

Call to Order

The meeting was brought to order by Chairperson Watkinson at 9:15 a.m.

Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the CEA meetings held on August 5, 2015 and September 9, 2015 were unanimously approved by all members upon removal of Doug French from the August 5, 2015 minutes who was not present for that meeting.

Meeting Time Change

Garrett will send out an email with a suggestion of new times for the CEA meeting to take place in the future to better accommodate members. The day of the week and frequency of meetings will stay the same, but will likely be moved to evenings.

Clarification of CEA Funding

Garrett spoke with Mandy Belyea, Director of Finance, and Mary Beth Price, County Administrator, and clarified that funds are accounted for annually by the County's Finance Director and rolled over if not spent. The CEA requires Board Action to allocate the accumulated funds to carry out conservation activities, such as purchasing development rights.

VDACS Approval Requirements

Kelly Mr. Morgan asked what approvals, if any, are needed to apply for Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services. Mr. Morgan said that the CEA does require Board approval to apply for grant funds. Further, Mr. Morgan responded that he spoke to VDACS and was told that the deadline for this fiscal year's round of grant funding has passed.

Donation of Funds

Dee asked if CEA had a project where the individual landowner wanted to place their land in an easement without partnering with the County or requiring the County to contribute funds, would the Board need to be involved? Kelly and Garrett replied that no, the Board would not be required to be involved in the decision. That could be done and would be a very ideal situation. The tax benefits would remain the same in that instance.

How to Handle Calls Regarding Interest in Easements

Garrett asked for input on how to handle and make the committee aware of calls regarding easements. He has received some calls from people who have removed their parcels from AFD but would like to put in place an easement that does not require county matching and do not particularly need or want the county involved. Doug stated that he would like the committee to still be aware of those situations and he would be willing to speak to the people if needed. Kelly would be interested in knowing how many calls are received with information regarding their interest and parcel locations. Cindy stated that when discussing this, the meeting needs to go into closed session.

Outreach

Garrett suggested more effective outreach to people concerning easements, possibly near Mt. Jackson Megasite and near Strasburg Rt. 55. Some focus in those areas could be beneficial. There is a limited amount of funds that can be used for outreach materials. Therefore, Kelly recommended creating partnerships with Potomac Conservancy and Valley Conservation Council. This may be the most successful way to do outreach. All members agreed.

Farm Transition Workshop

Garrett has been working with Sara Hollberg from VCC, who will be hosting a Farm Transition workshop. It is being held at Creekside Catering in Edinburg on November 17th from 5:15-8:30pm. VCC is sending out a survey to land owners regarding farm transitions. The survey is questioning what land owners are planning on doing with their farms long term. For example, are their children planning on taking over the farm. Garrett will forward an invite to CEA members so they can attend if interested.

Strategic Planning Process

Garrett would like to do a general overview of where current easements are, land uses, and potential changes. This may help in knowing what areas to target. Kelly suggested adding areas of interest to The Potomac Conservancy, VCC, as well as important battlefield lands and the new park to the informational maps.

Other Business

The next CEA meeting is scheduled for December 2nd. *Meeting Adjourned.*