



Shenandoah County
Conservation Easement Authority
Office of Community Development
600 North Main Street, Suite 107
Woodstock, VA 22664
www.shenandoahcountyva.us/conservation/

MEETING MINUTES

December 4, 2013; 9:00-11:00 AM

Board Conference Room

CEA Members present: Supervisor Dennis Morris, Planning Commissioner Leon Smith, Chairperson Kelly Watkinson, Vice Chairperson Dee Hockman, and Bud Griswold

Others Present: Patrick Felling, Bobby Clark, Richard Walker 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 2, 2013 was approved as presented.

Presentation of Easement Applications

Mr. Felling stated two (2) applications for easements have been submitted for consideration; a formal application and an informal application. If the CEA recommends, Mr. Felling will request a formal application to be submitted by the land owners.

Proposed Easement on *Baker Farm*

- 85.28 acres
- Minimal road frontage
- Perennial spring with a stream bisecting the farm
- Battlefield study area
- 7 usable developmental rights
- Parcel adjoins existing conservation easement property
- Working farm

In initial discussion with landowners, the family stated they are interested in an easement to keep the land in farming. Landowners have approached both the County and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation. When the topic of fencing the livestock out of the stream was mentioned, the landowners did not feel this was feasible given the current farming operation. Mr. Felling suggested the landowner discuss fencing options with the Soil & Water Conservation District staff. Mr. Clark stated he would be willing to meet with the landowners explain several options and help them understand how to put together a

plan and make it work. The landowners do not have any pressing need to quickly close on an easement, but would like to close within the next four years. The landowner has been informed that currently there are no county funds; so a purchased easement would not likely happen until states funds are available later in 2014 or 2015. Chairperson Watkinson stated this was an excellent opportunity. The landowners have their heart into it, they aren't in a hurry, and it is possible to do an easement without county money. Mr. Griswold suggested an easement could be possible with state and battlefield money. Mr. Felling indicated that a bargain price was not discussed, but the landowners were informed they would likely have to donate a portion. Mr. Griswold commented that a bargain sale easement may not involve a great deal of purchase funds. All members of CEA were excited about the Baker Farm easement and all agreed to move forward.

Mr. Felling introduced the second project, *Winkelman property*, which was not a formal application because it would be tough to get the minimum 15 points.

- Parcel is small, 13 acres.
- Only one potential subdivision
- 900 feet of stream frontage
- Cedar Creek area

Mr. Felling stated the landowner does not want to be paid for the easement, but sought tax reductions on the property. Supervisor Morris stated we need to contact County attorney and also talk with Revenue Department to see what options are available. Chairperson Watkinson stated donated easements do not have to meet the scoring criteria. VA Outdoor Foundation has identified Cedar Creek area as a priority. Mr. Felling stated the following restrictions were discussed with the landowner: no additional building, trees must remain (except for personal firewood). Commissioner Smith recommended the landowner submit an application, so the deadline is not missed.

Continue Discussion of Ordinance Revision

Mr. Walker stated that he disagreed with the §82.6 eligibility criteria. He stated that the ability should not be taken away from a farmer to put an easement on his property just because the land was located in a growth area. Mr. Felling indicated this item is a state law requiring easements comply with local comprehensive plans.

Discussion - Funding Request BOS

It was decided, after discussion, not to make a request at the December BOS meeting for funding. Instead, it was proposed that the CEA engage in the annual departmental budget review process to seek funding. Everyone agreed to request 50% of remaining roll back tax funds.

Develop Outreach Plan

Chairperson Watkinson stated we should include criteria information in outreach. Also stated she would be willing to make a presentation to civic groups. Mr. Felling will put together a power point presentation, to include economic issues, possibly for CEA to review at the next meeting. Supervisor Morris will get a list of community groups together for the CEA. He suggested sending out letters to civic organizations and also stated Church groups are very active. Vice-Chair Hockman suggested reaching out to women. Commissioner Smith stated going out to smaller groups would help get the word out.

Mr. Felling has discussed with Frederick County a proposal to produce several four-minute videos with the help of Shenandoah University. A list will be prepared of potential landowners to speak on the videos.

Other Business

Next meeting is scheduled for January 22nd 9 a.m.

Meeting Adjourned