

**STAFFORD COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT
RIGHTS COMMITTEE MINUTES
AUGUST 26, 2013**

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Purchase of Development Rights Committee for Monday, August 26, 2013, was called to order 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Jeff Adams in the County Administration Conference Room of the George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center.

Members Present: Jeff Adams, Gail Clark, Craig DeBenard, Marty McClevey

Members Absent: Peter O'Hara, Robert Hunt

Staff Present: Kathy Baker, Sylvia Dyson

Guests Present: Virginia Adams, Ron Wisniewski

1. Call to Order

The Chairman, Mr. Jeff Adams called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and asked Ms. Dyson to read the roll. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Minutes – July 22, 2013

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion on the approval of the minutes. Ms. Clark made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McClevey seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

3. Staff Update

Ms. Baker informed that on September 3rd at 12:00 p.m. the Board of Supervisor's Community and Economic Development Committee would meet to discuss the PDR program and the PDR Committee's recommendation and would forward their conclusion to the full Board of Supervisors. Ms. Baker stated that she would let the PDR Committee know which Board Meeting the PDR would go to, which would hopefully be the September 17th meeting.

Mr. Adams asked if Ms. Baker and Mr. Harbin would present in front of the Board. Ms. Baker affirmed.

Ms. Baker continued the update by talking about the new final total on the FY14 funds which was from the FY13 rollback tax which equaled up to about \$291,054.

Ms. Clark requested for Ms. Baker to take a look at the 2013 rollbacks to see how much money had been generated in each election district. Ms. Baker affirmed.

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4. New Business

- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program – Ron Wisniewski, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mr. Wisniewski handed out information packets to everybody. He explained that the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) was 1 of 4 easement programs that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers. He further explained that with three of the programs they were working directly with the landowners which were the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) which was not available in Virginia and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). He stated that the fourth program was the FRPP for which they partnered with other agencies. He explained that the purpose of that program was to try to protect agricultural use of land by limiting non-agricultural uses to that property by purchasing the development easement through another entity. The goal was to ensure future availability for farming purposes. Another goal was to protect potential historic or archaeological sites, as well as endangered species.

Mr. Wisniewski explained that they worked through partners like Stafford County. The County would identify potential applicants and the County would be the one to make the application to FRPP.

Mr. Wisniewski stated that his role in this program was limited, but he had experience with it since Spotsylvania County had gone through the process. The application would have to go through the State Office Coordinator for the Easement Program and his involvement in the process was limited to local needs like site visits, development of conservation plans, hazardous waste inventories, visual inspections, etc.

Mr. Wisniewski further explained that the program was looking for prime soil and there would have to be some criteria that related to that in the local ranking, however that was not the only criteria. They were also looking at local importance.

Mr. Wisniewski stated that they would also take an inventory according to their checklist. He also explained that impervious surfaces would not be included in the easement which meant that a percentage of the applicant's houses, barns, parking lots, etc. would not be included.

Ms. Baker asked if an existing house site would be excluded from the easement. Mr. Wisniewski explained that that would depend on the percentage of the property. He further explained that in the regular easements that were directly held by them, the farmstead, working areas, etc. were usually excluded.

Ms. Clark stated that she had a hard time discounting barn structures since those were definitely used for agricultural purposes. Mr. Wisniewski replied that they were only looking at

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the agricultural land.

Mr. Wisniewski explained that the funding would be 50 percent of the cost of the easement to include appraisal, surveying, cost, etc. The purpose was to leverage the money to possibly permit the entity to get more than one easement.

Ms. Clark asked if the application process was on a rolling basis or if there was a deadline and if he and Ms. Diane Dunaway would assist Ms. Baker in the process. Mr. Wisniewski affirmed and explained that there would be an outlined form and the County would have to supply certain documents and give prescriptions of the property, etc.

Ms. Clark asked to make sure that not having a Conservation Plan would not eliminate the property since they could still work on one and apply it. Mr. Wisniewski agreed.

Mr. Wisniewski pointed out that not every property will necessarily be a good match.

Mr. Adams asked Ms. Baker if there was a way to convey to the Board of Supervisors that if they approved the 3 properties before November 15th to get the federal matching. Ms. Baker explained that the BOS would authorize the purchase of easements on certain parcels and allocate the money that they have which they had already done by resolution saying that the money from the land use rollbacks was allocated to that already. She explained that all the BOS would have to do is authorize the Committee to proceed with the purchase and which could be contingent upon additional funding received. She stated that the Committee would have to be a little creative on how to use the money since they had two years of state money at this point and the original amount would have to be used by December 2013. She also pointed out that there were two pots available at this point, plus potential state funding, plus potential state funding again in October and they would have to discuss how to best put all that money to use.

Ms. Baker asked Mr. Wisniewski if they needed a willing seller and proof that the money would be available when they put in the application. Mr. Wisniewski replied that there would be certain stipulations. Ms. Baker also inquired if they would have to wait with the closing of the properties until they are going through the application process which Mr. Wisniewski affirmed.

Mr. Adams asked Ms. Baker if it was reasonable to expect the Board to give their authorization. Ms. Baker explained that she was hoping that they would do so on September 17th. She further explained that they would still have to go through the official process of authorizing the application.

There was another discussion on the potential amount of money available. Mr. Adams estimated that the Committee would be able to buy 36 lots. Ms. Baker stated that it would probably more than that due to the state match and FRPP. Mr. McClevey pointed out that the lots would however have to be on base with the FRPP program. Mr. Wisniewski pointed out that even though the properties were similar, each one would be different, but there were also a

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couple of other easement programs that might work.

Mr. Wisniewski explained that it will take a lot of staff effort to get approved for the easement program. He stated that the most important thing would be to come up with the correct language to ensure the landowner complies with the stipulations. Ms. Baker asked if the checklists were available online. Mr. Wisniewski affirmed.

Ms. Baker explained that the Committee would not do an offer for a property by appraisal and if that would be a problem in regards to FRPP. Mr. Wisniewski recommended talking to Diane. Mr. Adams inquired what kind of appraisal would be required. Mr. Wisniewski explained that they would simply look at how the amount of money had been determined, but he also stated that their checklist was very similar to the Committee's.

Ms. Baker asked if there were yearly application, as in the same time each year. Mr. Wisniewski explained that for the conservation programs there was a continuous applications, but they did specify times where funding would be done. He further explained that they typically accepted applications from late fall until Mid-January. After the cutoff date the applications received will be looked at for the first round of consideration. He stated that they could potentially accept more applications after the cutoff date if there were additional funds available.

Mr. McClevey asked if woodland would have to be excluded. Mr. Wisniewski explained that woodland is also considered an agricultural product.

Ms. Clark stated that at least one of the properties would have to be settled by December 31st and that that wouldn't be appropriate for the easement program regardless. Ms. Baker explained that only the \$66,000 from 2 years ago plus the matching would have to be spent by the end of this year.

Ms. Clark asked if the Board was likely to approve all three pieces of land even though the funds were not available at this point or if they would approve working towards the funding. Ms. Baker explained that the Board would have to authorize the purchase of the development rights, but she could not say whether they would authorize the purchase contingent upon additional funding being secured or if they would authorize a certain amount an order the Committee to come back when the funds are available. Ms. Baker stated she would also have to talk to Finance.

Mr. McClevey asked if using federal money would be an issue. Mr. Wisniewski negated.

- Farmer's Market

Mr. Adams stated that three weeks prior to this meeting he went to the farmer's market at the hospital. He stated that he was approached by a seller regarding her dislike of the producer only rules.

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Ms. Clark stated that there should be a meeting with Vanessa Griffin to recap on the whole farmer's market issue.

Mr. Adams stated that some of the biggest complaints from the vendors were regarding dogs on the market.

Mr. Wisniewski asked if there was a way to best share information with vendors about, for example, organic programs and things of that nature. Ms. Adams stated that the Fredericksburg Market Manager was excellent about sharing links about those kinds of things.

Ms. Clark asked Mr. Wisniewski if greenhouses fell under impervious surfaces. He replied that he would have to verify.

- Reduce Lot Size in Cluster Design Sub-Division

Ms. Clark stated that in A-1 a minimum of 3 acres would be required and that that size is going to be reduced to 1.5 acres and asked if the other 1.5 acres would have to be put into a combined open area or recreation area. Ms. Baker replied that a certain percentage would have to be open space.

5. Next Meeting

- September 23rd, 2013 Regular Meeting

Ms. Baker if there was any business to discuss. Mr. Adams stated that other than an update on what the Board does regarding PDR there was no other business to discuss.

Ms. Baker recommended leaving the meeting open and cancel it if there is no business to discuss.

6. Adjournment

Since there was no further business to discuss, Ms. Clark made a motion to adjourn. Mr. McClevey seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.