AGRICULTURAL AND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS COMMITTEE MINUTES
November 30, 2015

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Purchase of Development Rights Committee for Monday, November 30, 2015, was called to order 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Marty McClevey in the County Administration Conference Room of the George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center.

Members Present:	Marty McClevey, John Howe (7:10), Jeff Adams, Benjamin Rudasill, and Robin Long
Members Absent:	Craig DeBernard
Staff Present:	Kathy Baker, Joe Fiorello and Denise Knighting
Guests Present:	None

1. Call to Order

Mr. McClevey called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He asked Ms. Knighting to call roll, a quorum was present with 4 of the 6 members in attendance. With no public presentations he moved on to approval of minutes.

2. Public Presentations

None

3. Approval of Minutes – September 28, 2015

Mr. McClevey stated he had one correction on page 3 line 96, "if" should be "of".

Mrs. Long made a motion to accept the minutes with the correction.

Mr. Rudasill seconded.

The motion passed 3 – 0 (Mr. Howe was absent, Mr. Adams abstained).

4. Staff Update

Mr. McClevey asked Ms. Baker to give the staff update.

- PDR update

Ms. Baker stated that the Jones Farms was progressing and that the official agreement had been received from the Department of Conservation and Recreation with the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) grant information; it had been signed and sent back. She further stated that a request for quotes for an appraisal had been put out since the appraisal was a requirement through the VLCF program. Ms. Baker stated that the deadline was tomorrow for additional quotes and that two had already been received.

Mr. Adams inquired why it had to be put out for bids.

Mrs. Baker explained that it was county procedure and that a minimum of three quotes were required.

Mr. Adams inquired how staff was able to find appraisers since there were not a lot that would do that kind of work.

Ms. Baker explained that she had contacted other localities in trying to get some names and managed to find 5 firms. She stated that staff was getting ready to send in the draft deed to DCR and VDACS to get comments. She added once that was received back and the appraisal was done, they were probably looking at a March/April 2016 closing. Ms. Baker stated that staff put in the application for the next round of VDACS funds hoping to get another $250,000 in order to be a step closer to moving forward with the Harris property.

Mr. Adams inquired what would happen if the appraisal did not come back with the right amount.

Ms. Baker explained that it meant that they would not receive the full reimbursable amount, but added that since they were only getting partial funding from VLCF it would not matter. She informed the Committee that she sent out a notice for the upcoming Virginia United Land Trust conference in Fredericksburg, which was hosted by Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Ms. Baker felt that it was a good program with activities and a lot of speakers over a two day period. She stated that she would speak with them to see if the county could offer some activities. She encouraged the Committee members to come up with some ideas.

Mr. Rudasill stated that he had been informed by the Wilsons that they were very dissatisfied with the appraisal and were not considering PDR any longer.

Ms. Baker reiterated that almost half of the property was hydric soils, wetlands, and floodplain and therefore could not offer the amount of development rights that the property owners were hoping for.

Mr. McClevey inquired if Ms. Baker had an update on the Board of Supervisors' intent to consolidate all programs.

Ms. Baker stated that staff went to the Community and Economic Development Committee the previous month. She stated that Northern Virginia Conservation Trust also participated in that meeting and were currently working on a memorandum explaining what they would be able to do, such as workshops and other informational sessions, as well as contacting property owners. She added that the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust was willing to take some in-kind trades, such as providing them with an office space and computer for one of their employees. Ms. Baker estimated for this matter to go back to the Board's Committee in February.

5. New Business

- PDR Program – Discuss Changes to Ordinance

Mr. McClevey felt that the ranking criteria was probably the most important item to discuss, but was open to suggestions from the other Committee members.

Mr. Adams felt that the Board of Supervisors needed to make more funds available since otherwise the County wouldn't be able to close on any more properties until two years from now anyways.

Mr. McClevey stated that more funds from the Board were unrealistic at this time.

Mr. Rudasill stated that although the ranking system seemed to work out in most of the cases and was not certain that the ranking was a problem.

Ms. Baker suggested coming back next meeting with some information on clustering and how that might affect a property.

Mr. McClevey stated that a practical thing the Committee could look at was excluding A-2 properties from the PDR program. He also suggested that the Committee could come up with target zones in order to preserve specific areas of the county.

Mr. Rudasill did not feel that having target areas was the best idea and that the program should not be limited in that way. Ms. Baker questioned what the purpose of the target zones was.

Mr. Adams felt that it was a matter of being able to target the more significant farms, farms with better soils.

Ms. Baker pointed out that the current criteria already favored land with good soils.

Mr. McClevey felt that the target zones would enable the Committee to create a corridor of farms rather than having pieces of land scattered throughout the county. He stated that from a wildlife perspective, the smaller pieces of land did not really do much for the wildlife.

Mr. Adams felt that target zones could also help rehabilitate impaired streams by getting the surrounding farms into the program.

Ms. Baker stated that from that standpoint there was a state mandate which would require the county to do that anyway.

In looking through the ordinance, Mr. McClevey reiterated that the cooperation with Quantico had already been added and was wondering whether the cooperation with Northern Virginia Conservation Trust would have to be added as well. Ms. Baker stated that working cooperatively with federal and state government, as well as non-profit organizations was already included in the ordinance.

Mr. Adams suggested a change to the eligibility criteria and changing the 20 acres minimum to enable farm owners to add additional land to the easement.

Ms. Baker stated that this would require a change in wording to read "b) may be less than 20 acres if adjacent to an existing easement". The Committee added that it would also have to be owned by the same owner.

Mr. Howe made a motion to change item b) to be expanded to include an exception for parcel smaller than 20 acres provided that they were owned by an individual who had an adjoining property with a PDR easement on it.

Mr. McClevey suggested the language "parcels smaller than 20 acres, contiguous to and owned by a current PDR program participant".

Mr. Howe accepted the changed wording of the motion.

Mr. Rudasill seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4-0. Mr. Adams abstained.

Ms. Baker asked if there was any more discussion on item c) in reference to A-1 and A-2 since it was mentioned earlier.

Mr. Adams stated that he and Ms. Clark (former Committee member) had talked about not excluding A-2, but to work it as an A-1 formula so that when it came to purchasing development rights each easement would have to be at least 3 acres even though 1 acre lots were permissible in A-2.

Mr. McClevey did not feel landowners would agree to that.

Ms. Baker stated that in reality that meant they were weeding out the A-2 by doing this, but there might be a few A-2 owners that would be willing to accept it.

Mr. Howe agreed. The committee agreed to leave this part as is for the time being.

Mr. McClevey asked Ms. Baker if she thought that the County would ever change the way it allocated lots based on new septic systems.

Ms. Baker responded that the County would have to rely on what the state allowed and required or didn't require.

Mr. Fiorello stated that he did not see the methodology changing in the near future.

Ms. Baker stated that staff could talk to the health department to get their take on this.

Mr. McClevey asked the Committee if they had any thoughts on section A, quality of the parcel.

Ms. Baker suggested adding one point for anything under 20 acres under item 1, size of property.

Mr. Howe suggested adding "if eligible". Ms. Baker asked if there was any opposition to the suggested change. There was no opposition from the Committee.

Mr. McClevey asked if there were any comments on "average farmer's age".

Ms. Baker added that according to statistics on age showed that at a certain age the likelihood of a property staying as farm land was lower.

Mr. Howe felt that the average age of farmers was between 55 and 57.

Mr. Adams stated that the average age of farmers on Kellogg Mill Road was 70 and that there were no children looking to take over which meant that the farms would eventually be sold off.

Ms. Baker stated that that was the reason this particular criteria had been added.

Mr. McClevey brought up batch applications and that there had been discussion as to why they were allotted 5 points.

Ms. Baker did not know why the criteria had been added, other than it being incentive to put in more property. She did however not feel that 5 out of 270 points was enough of an incentive. She reiterated that the Holsinger as well as the Shelton farms were batch applications.

Mr. McClevey reiterated that proximity to historical or cultural features was worth 15 points according to the ranking criteria and was wondering if it was any advantage to adding points for properties along state designated by-ways and bike routes, as well as civil war sites.

Ms. Baker stated she would look into the possibility although she did not feel that bike routes were a cultural feature.

Mr. Adams and Mr. Howe agreed that bike trails could possibly be moved and therefore it was probably not a good idea to add it to the criteria.

Ms. Baker stated she would come back with information on the location of the civil war trail, as well as the scenic by-way and bike trails.

6. Unfinished Business

Mr. McClevey thanked the Committee and staff for their participation in the Parks & Rec Fall Festival. He felt that the event had a great turnout and was a success. He further stated that he was unaware that there was an entry fee of $10 which he did not agree with. Mr. McClevey stated he contacted VDOT regarding Farm Tractor Safety but has been unsuccessful in trying to set up a meeting so far. He explained that he would like to get seasonal flashing signs of some sort put up cautioning the public that there was increased tractor activity. Mr. McClevey suggested getting the Farm Bureau involved too.

7. Next Meeting

- December 28, 2015 (confirm date)

After a brief discussion by the Committee members it was decided to cancel the December meeting.

Mr. McClevey stated the Committee would meet in January, after the Board of Supervisors made their new appointments to the Commissions and Committees.

Ms. Baker stated she would have the information discussed for the January meeting.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Howe made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Rudasill seconded.

The motion passed 5-0.

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p. m.