

***AGRICULTURAL AND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT  
RIGHTS COMMITTEE MINUTES  
July 26, 2021***

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Purchase of Development Rights Committee for Monday, July 26, 2021, was called to order at 7:21 p.m. in the ABC Conference Room in the George L. Gordon Government Center by Robert Broxton, Vice Chairman.

Members Present: Robert Broxton, Jeff Adams, Chad Young, Carlos Bratton

Members Absent: Benjamin Rudasill, Alandra Simmons, and John Howe (attended virtually)

Staff Present: Kathy Baker and Vicki Sowers

1. Call to Order

Mr. Broxton called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Sowers to call roll. Ms. Sowers called roll and Mr. Broxton stated there was a quorum.

2. Public Presentations

None

3. Staff Update

- PDR 2017 Applications Update

Ms. Baker stated that the Littlejohn appraisal was submitted, and staff is working with the owners to finalize the deed of easement. She also stated that the Jones Farm grant application for additional matching funds would be submitted to VLCF on August 9. Also, USDA indicated they did not want to give back the funds that were approved for the Moore property, and asked if the County wanted to re-evaluate the application and proceed with the funds that were already in place. The issue is that the owner wants to reserve four house sites for his children. The original application was for 70 acres, with 12 acres of the overall 82 acres being held out of the easement for the house sites. He now wants the four house sites on 20-acre lots on the overall 82 acres. Staff discussed this and thought that a solution would be offering the same money for the additional acreage, which is achieving the same outcome of four house sites on the total property. The Committee members agreed that this was acceptable.

4. Unfinished Business

- Board of Supervisors FY2022 Recommendations
  - Northern Virginia Conservation Trust Partnership

Ms. Baker stated she met with staff from NVCT regarding a potential partnership and development of an MOU to assist with the County's Land Conservation program. She also had a follow up meeting with the County Administrator's office to discuss the proposal and get input. The proposal would focus on the donated land/easement program, and would include outreach and education, creation of the process, and recommendations for assistance with up-front costs such as appraisals. NVCT would develop a job description for a full-time equivalency position and a draft MOU by the end of the year, for the Board to consider after January 1.

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A general discussion ensued regarding the difference between the current PDR program and what a donated program looks like, and whether a staff person would be a County staff or NVCT staff. Ms. Baker indicated this would be a NVCT staff member, but could utilize County office space and equipment.

○ Appraisal Process

Ms. Baker said the Board has directed staff to come up with an appraisal process for the PDR program to ensure that the easements we acquire are substantiated by an appraisal. Ms. Baker stated she met with staff from the Commissioner of Revenue's office regarding the development of an appraisal process. They indicated that they would not have good data on A-1 property values until they saw more sales of raw land, which would likely be after the first of the year. In the meantime, they will assist in drafting a process and language to include in the County Code that would require an appraisal be completed for new PDR applications. Discussion ensued regarding property values based on the A-1 zoning change. The point was raised that property owners may not be interested in the program if the compensation that is currently offered is cut in half. Language for the appraisal process will be brought back to the Committee at a future meeting.

○ PDR Ranking Criteria

Ms. Baker referenced the handout that was sent to them prior to the meeting showing the current PDR ranking criteria, with notes in red for recommended changes. She reviewed each section and asked for input regarding these comments. In general, some of the proposed changes are reflective of ConserveVirginia criteria that is used by the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) to rank projects submitted for matching funds for conservation easements. Including similar criteria in the County ranking criteria would allow PDR projects to rank higher when applications for funds are submitted to VLCF.

A general discussion ensued, and Ms. Baker stated the members should take time to review the materials. She indicated she would send out examples of the ConserveVirginia criteria and send GIS screenshots of the Jones Farm, showing the various data layers. An application for the Jones Farm was recently submitted to VLCF for funding. Discussion on this item will continue at the next meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

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Mr. Broxton made a motion to defer this to next meeting, since some of the members had not been in attendance.

Mr. Bratton seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4-0.

6. Member Comments

Mr. Adams noted that Friday is VSU Field Day at 7:30 at Randolph Farm. He also stated that two new positions were approved for Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District. This increases their staff from four to six people. He also indicated that agriculture is still desirable in Stafford. He has a produce stand at the end of his driveway, and is surprised what it can be worth at the end of the day.

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7. Next Meeting

- August 23, 2021

8. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss Mr. Broxton adjourned the meeting at 7.58pm.