

September 1, 2005

PRESENT: Dr. Charles W. Curry, Chairman  
Charles C. Schooley, Vice Chairman  
Larry C. Howdyshell  
Garland Martin  
Mark Grove  
William Bashaw  
Bruce M. Bowman  
Kitra A. Shiflett  
Larry Shiflett  
Betty Jo Hamilton  
Clay Hewitt  
Dale L. Cobb  
Beatrice B. Cardellicchio

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeremy Sharp  
Tom Stanley, Extension Office

ABSENT: None

VIRGINIA: Meeting of the Agricultural Task Force Committee held on Thursday, September 1, 2005, at 7:00 P.M., in the County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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Chairman Curry asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2005 meeting?

Mr. Bowman moved to approve the minutes.

Vice Chairman Schooley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chairman Curry asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2005 meeting?

Ms. Shiflett moved to approve the minutes.

Mr. Martin seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chairman Curry stated that there were no items in the suggestion box.

Chairman Curry asked if there was anyone wanting to comment on Dr. Kohl's presentation?

Tom Stanley stated that he recorded the presentation on tape if any of the committee members wanted to view it. He also handed out his notes on the presentation to the committee members.

Mr. Howdyshell asked how much did they want to give towards Dr. Kohl's honorarium?

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Mr. Bowman stated anywhere from \$500 - \$1,000.

Mr. Howdysshell moved that the committee give \$750 out of the grant money for the honorarium to Dr. Kohl.

Mr. Grove seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mr. Martin stated that he enjoyed the presentation and Dr. Kohl had a lot of good points.

Mr. Bashaw stated that he is a very educated speaker. He stated that he does not think he had solutions to our problems because he had given up on protecting farmland from development.

Chairman Curry stated that he was disappointed as well.

Vice Chairman Schooley stated that he was negative. He thought that Dr. Kohl should have a little more hope for keeping the family farms alive.

Mr. Hewitt stated that this committee should not dwell on the housing issue but they should try and figure out ways to keep farmers farming.

Chairman Curry stated that one of the items on the agenda tonight is the sliding scale land use taxation. He stated that staff put together a chart. He stated that we do not have control over land use values but do have control over sliding scale land use.

Mr. Shiflett stated that this did not help Loudoun County.

Mr. Grove stated that the only way to have an impact is through land use.

Mr. Cobb stated that the figures on the land use chart are actual parcels in Augusta County. He stated that this information is recorded at the courthouse. He stated that when the property changes owners the land use would show up when doing a title search. He stated that this is similar to conservation easements but it is not for a lifetime.

Chairman Curry stated that you are not saving as much money as he thought you would. He asked the committee if they would like to put sliding scale on the recommendation list?

Mr. Shiflett stated that the Board of Supervisors may want to look at this program.

Ms. Hamilton and Mr. Martin both stated that this should be put on the list.

Mr. Hewitt stated that he would not be interested in this program.

Mr. Howdysshell stated that if a farmer could save a little money than it is worthwhile.

Mr. Grove stated that he agrees with Mr. Howdysshell.

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Ms. Shiflett stated that she was disappointed that the savings was not greater. She stated that this program should be explained to the public before they sign up for it.

Mr. Bowman stated that he agrees. He stated that there should be someone that gives the citizens the pros and cons of signing up for a program like this.

Mr. Cobb stated that there is a big penalty if you get out of the program.

Chairman Curry stated that sliding scale land use should be added to the recommendations list. He stated that the next item on the agenda is conservation easements.

Mr. Cobb stated that the Virginia Outdoors Foundation holds 49 easements totaling 6,739 acres. Valley Conservation holds 16 easements totaling 478 acres. He stated that if there were a conservation easement request that is not in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan than it would go before the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Hamilton stated that conservation easements are situation specific. She stated that in some cases they will work but in others it may not. She stated that she rents a farm that is under a conservation easement.

Chairman Curry stated that conservation easements already exist. He stated that it is whether a farmer uses the program or not.

Mr. Bashaw stated that if a farmer wants to put an easement on their property it should be up to them.

Mr. Bowman stated that this is a tool for the toolbox. He stated that there should be someone to explain to the citizens all of the pros and cons before signing up.

Ms. Shiflett stated that she thinks that conservation easements should stay on the list.

Mr. Grove stated that farmers have access to land that is cheaper with an easement on it. He stated that he thinks conservation easements should stay in as well.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that if the land is being used for farming than conservation easements are a good idea. He stated that some people will abuse all of the benefits from putting land in easements.

Mr. Hewitt stated that this is voluntary and he is not opposed to it.

Mr. Martin stated that this program is voluntary and if someone does not want to sign up then they do not have to.

Ms. Hamilton stated that she agrees.

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Mr. Shiflett stated that this program is not geared toward the working farmer.

Vice Chairman Schooley stated that the Board of Supervisors should work on the loopholes to be sure that the land stays in productive agriculture.

Chairman Curry stated that Emmit Hanger is working on a committee to stop the abuse of conservation easements.

Mr. Cobb stated that he could ask the County Attorney to comment on the loopholes. He stated that if all of your land is in the program then there would be no development rights left.

Chairman Curry stated that conservation easements should be added to the recommendation list.

Chairman Curry stated that the next topic on the agenda is TDR.

Mr. Sharp stated that Arlington County is the only locality in Virginia that is enabled to use TDRs. He stated that the County would set up sending and receiving areas. He stated that TDR programs remove density from the sending areas but require the designation of receiving areas at higher density. He stated that there must be a willingness to accept higher density development somewhere in the County or the TDR program will not work. He stated that in order to further encourage the transfer of rights rather than developing in sending areas, localities commonly grant bonus density as part of the transfer.

Mr. Cobb stated that they would soon be getting the build out analysis.

Mr. Bashaw stated that the County needs to concentrate on creating towns to prevent development on agricultural land.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that the County targets development where infrastructure is.

Ms. Hamilton stated that this program is not available to Augusta County.

Mr. Martin stated that he feels the same way.

Mr. Hewitt stated that he has no comment.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that it would take the state legislature to get this program but it could be worthwhile.

Ms. Shiflett stated that we have to lobby the legislative a little bit. She stated that it could be one tool in the future.

Chairman Curry stated that this is a good idea and worth lobbying for. He asked for a show of hands if this should be added to the recommendation list. He stated that nine committee members would like to put TDRs on the recommendation list. He stated that two were opposed.

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Chairman Curry stated that TDRs should be added to the recommendation list.

Mr. Cobb stated that staff has come up with a number of examples of agri-tourism. He stated that these are ways that a farmer could use entertainment as a form of getting some additional money. He stated that some examples are bed and breakfasts, farmers markets, pumpkin festivals, etc.

Mr. Martin stated that farmers could hold farm vacations. He stated that city folk could spend a week on the farm.

Chairman Curry stated that tourism is a major factor.

Mr. Grove stated that there are hunt clubs available as well.

Ms. Hamilton asked how zoning enforces these businesses?

Mr. Cobb stated that a Special Use Permit is needed for most of these businesses. He stated that most Special Use Permits could be applied for in General Agriculture. He stated that in Exclusive Agriculture the property owner is limited to businesses that have to do with farming.

Mr. Cobb stated that he could list the businesses that could be done on property zoned General Agriculture and Exclusive Agriculture through a Special Use Permit.

Ms. Shiflett stated that the Planning Commission discourages businesses in agricultural areas.

Mr. Bashaw stated that you would probably need a Special Use Permit for most of the businesses on this list. He stated that these should be addressed specifically for each location.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that these items need to be looked at.

Mr. Hewitt stated that he supports all of these items and they should all be explored.

Mr. Cobb stated that he would create a list on the Special Use Permits and the limitations in Exclusive Agriculture and General Agriculture.

Chairman Curry stated that the last public meeting they had there was very little participation. He stated that maybe after getting some ideas on paper the committee could have another public meeting. He stated that he hopes to have something on paper within the next 45 days.

Mr. Bowman stated maybe they should have one meeting early to mid October.

Chairman Curry stated that the Comprehensive Plan meeting is October 17, 2005. He stated that they should not have a meeting close to that meeting.

Chairman Curry asked the committee how they would like to proceed with the writing of a draft recommendation. He asked if the committee should continue to operate as a whole, divide into

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groups, have staff write the recommendations, or if he should go back into the minutes and create a first draft.

Mr. Bashaw stated that he thinks the last idea would work best.

Mr. Martin stated that with groups there will be too many people and they would be bogged down.

Chairman Curry stated that he will be drafting up some recommendations.

Mr. Bowman stated that he will be going to Virginia Beach to go over their PDR program. He stated that there are four different types of enterprises in the program at Virginia Beach.

Chairman Curry stated that with agricultural forestal districts does the committee want to have citizens be allowed to pull out of the program to go into conservation easements.

Mr. Bowman stated that the Board of Supervisors should be allowed to let them out.

Ms. Shiflett stated that they should guarantee that they do not build houses on the land if they are allowed to pull out of the forestal district.

Mr. Cobb stated that if a property is in an agricultural forestal district they cannot be placed in a conservation easement because the land is already protected. He stated that he would get the County Attorney to look at this issue.

Mr. Howdysshell asked if staff has prepared a comparison to the Clarke County ordinance?

Mr. Cobb stated that they are working on that. He stated that they are trying to work on getting Bobby Whitescarver to speak on national programs working in other counties which was at the top of the list for information and data at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman