

March 3, 2005

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Sandi Scannelli

ABSENT: None

VIRGINIA: Meeting of the Agricultural Task Force Committee held on Thursday, March 3, 2005, at 7:00 P.M., in the County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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Chairman Curry asked if the committee had a motion to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2005 meeting?

Ms. Shiflett moved that the minutes be approved.

Mr. Bowman seconded the motion, which was carried by a unanimous vote.

Chairman Curry introduced Sandi Scannelli who will be the facilitator for the brainstorming session.

Ms. Scannelli asked if the goal as stated: "To identify major challenges facing agriculture in Augusta County and recommend ways to assure the future of preserving and promoting a strong agricultural economy over the next several decades." was correct?

Mr. Bowman stated that the goal is correct.

Ms. Scannelli stated that the committee will brainstorm on five different lists. They are as follows:

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1. Known Problems, Threats, Issues In Augusta County Preservation And Promotion Of Agriculture
2. Information, Data, and Resources To Be Explored
3. Opportunities to Preserve and Promote Agriculture
4. Strategies and Tools (Ideas) for County to Preserve and Promote Agriculture
5. Action Options for the Task Force

Ms. Scannelli went over rules on brainstorming. They are as follows:

1. Give as many ideas as possible without criticism and judgment.
2. All ideas are welcome.
3. No discussion.
4. Building on other ideas is fine.
5. Watch your expressions and comments.

Ms. Scannelli stated that she will give ten minutes for each list. She stated that the committee can list as much as they can in the ten minutes.

Ms. Scannelli stated the first topic is:

KNOWN PROBLEMS, THREATS, ISSUES IN AUGUSTA COUNTY PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURE

Ms. Hamilton stated urban sprawl.

Mr. Bowman stated loss of productive agricultural land.

Ms. Hamilton stated increasing land value resulting in increased taxes.

Mr. Martin stated farming where industry is located.

Chairman Curry stated the reduction in the number of family farms.

Ms. Hamilton stated the pressure from non-compatible uses.

Chairman Curry stated criticism of intensive agriculture.

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Mr. Shiflett stated the County giving mixed signals – left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing.

Mr. Grove stated competition for land among agriculture people.

Ms. Shiflett stated the conflict on roads with the farm equipment and cars.

Ms. Hamilton stated farmers die without replacement/or they are aging.

Chairman Curry stated the average age of a farmer is 57-58.

Mr. Shiflett stated estate taxes.

Mr. Howdyshell stated the ability to have facilities to market the products.

Mr. Bashaw stated economic viability of farming including increased costs, decreased income, and health insurance costs.

Chairman Curry stated capital investment required to farm.

Mr. Martin stated flexibility of product prices.

Ms. Shiflett stated diseases.

Ms. Hamilton stated weather.

Mr. Howdyshell stated environmentalists target farmers first.

Chairman Curry stated shortage of affordable labor.

Ms. Hamilton stated labor shortage.

Mr. Shiflett stated sewerage treatment plants.

Ms. Hamilton stated farmers are in the minority with no lobby and no time to speak up.

Chairman Curry stated low real estate tax encourages development.

Mr. Shiflett stated poor press.

Ms. Shiflett stated public fear of biotechnology.

Chairman Curry stated rapid expansion of technology and the need for training.

Mr. Bashaw stated the public's perception of agriculture and the need to sell agriculture is good.

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Ms. Scannelli introduced the next topic which is:

INFORMATION, DATA, AND RESOURCES TO BE EXPLORED

Ms. Hamilton stated programs from American Farmland Trust.

Mr. Bowman stated that the committee should look at Albemarle/Loudon's experiences and their programs.

Chairman Curry stated that they need to look at national programs that are working in other counties.

Ms. Shiflett stated the committee should look at counties that have made PDRs (Purchase Development Rights) work.

Chairman Curry stated obtaining agriculture enterprise zone information from the state legislator.

Chairman Curry stated to create a list of organizations and businesses that are their allies.

Mr. Grove stated how much flexibility does Augusta County have to do these things.

Mr. Bashaw stated how much money is the County willing to spend to pursue this.

Mr. Bashaw also stated get ideas, share, and discuss them with other farmers.

Dr. Curry stated find out residential development information. He stated which includes how many lots and areas that are projected for development.

Ms. Hamilton stated what are the critical areas for agriculture?

Mr. Shiflett stated what are the County's plans for development, i.e. Toyota.

Chairman Curry stated what is the prototype of development desired by the County.

Mr. Howdyshell stated how much does agriculture do for Augusta County/state. He also stated what are the figures. He further stated what are the tax dollars paid by farm and non-farm households as well as the cost of services required by farm and non-farm households.

Ms. Hamilton stated to get the average Augusta County perception of farming. She further stated if citizens want agriculture as well as what the non-farmers want in Augusta County.

Chairman Curry stated to create an economic profile of the Augusta County farmer/farm.

Chairman Curry stated who is creating lots in agriculture.

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Mr. Bowman stated tapping into other businesses and organizations like Chamber of Commerce to promote agriculture as other businesses.

Mr. Bashaw stated find ways that Augusta County can work with Virginia's new Secretary of Agriculture.

Mr. Bashaw stated find ways to convince others that agriculture can improve the quality of life.

Ms. Scannelli introduced the next topic which is:

OPPORTUNITIES TO PRESERVE AND PROMOTE AGRICULTURE

Ms. Shiflett stated the revision of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Bowman stated new urban neighbors. He also stated if they are a market.

Mr. Grove stated to become a price maker vs. a price taker.

Mr. Shiflett stated that different nationalities moving in may want a product the farmers can grow/raise.

Mr. Bashaw stated that the Agricultural Task Force is an opportunity.

Chairman Curry stated to get other supportive groups/agencies to partner with.

Mr. Grove stated that new agriculture industries create new agriculture businesses.

Chairman Curry stated educational institutions.

Mr. Bashaw stated how will the state provide information, support and help Augusta County.

Mr. Grove stated move agriculture land use to continued agriculture land use.

Mr. Bowman stated that by using groups like 4-H and Valley VoTech to education youth and bring agriculture into the classroom.

Ms. Hamilton stated training opportunities at VVTC and BRCC that are leading to more labor.

Ms. Hamilton stated economic vitality of agriculture helps economic vitality of others (banks, etc.).

Mr. Grove stated education of the public.

Mr. Grove stated hosting state farm show.

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Ms. Hamilton stated to have agriculture events to bring people to the area.

Chairman Curry stated forums/conferences.

Ms. Hamilton stated keeping County costs lower with the lower infrastructure needs.

Ms. Shiflett stated services.

Ms. Scannelli introduced the next topic which is:

STRATEGIES AND TOOLS (IDEAS) FOR COUNTY TO PRESERVE AND PROMOTE AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howdyshell stated good press.

Mr. Bowman stated conservation easements.

Ms. Shiflett stated Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Bowman stated PDR.

Chairman Curry stated TDR.

Mr. Bashaw stated the use of the internet to post agriculture information (including Task Force information).

Mr. Howdyshell stated BMPs.

Ms. Shiflett stated Agriculture Districts/Agriculture Forest Districts.

Ms. Shiflett stated zoning.

Chairman Curry stated land use taxation.

Chairman Curry stated sliding scale for land use tax.

Ms. Shiflett stated to recapture taxes removed from land use.

Mr. Bashaw stated penalties for construction other than agriculture on agricultural land.

Chairman Curry stated redefine eligibility for land use.

Mr. Howdyshell stated to work with state legislators to create legislation.

Mr. Shiflett stated work with law enforcement on violations of farm use equipment and vehicles.

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Chairman Curry stated impact fees.

Mr. Grove stated concentrate on development.

Ms. Hamilton stated duct tape.

Chairman Curry stated using brochures to educate.

Mr. Bowman stated real estate surtax to build PDR fund.

Chairman Curry stated raise real estate taxes on residential property.

Chairman Curry stated post road signage in agriculture districts and zones.

Mr. Shiflett stated rezoning appropriate areas to take the pressure off of agriculture.

Chairman Curry stated Special Use Permits for residential development in agricultural zones.

Mr. Shiflett stated stop immediate subdivision of Exclusive Agriculture land.

Mr. Bashaw stated to have a housing number quota.

Mr. Howdysshell stated to limit the number of lots that can be created per year.

Mr. Bashaw stated Augusta County should create a Director of Agriculture to assist farmers, offer technical assistance, research information from other counties, conduct public relations, offer emergency help and interpret laws/regulations.

Mr. Bashaw stated create a group health insurance program for farmers.

Mr. Bashaw stated the issue of bulk/co-op buying.

Mr. Bashaw stated tax relief for agriculture residences.

Ms. Scannelli introduced the next topic which is:

#### ACTION OPTIONS FOR THE TASK FORCE

Chairman Curry stated review Rockingham County plan.

Chairman Curry stated review Augusta County ordinances.

Mr. Shiflett stated to have a speaker (farmer) from an area where a plan has been implemented (an area with a good plan and an area with an ineffective plan).

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Mr. Bowman stated Task Force members share with each other information collected from other areas/states.

Chairman Curry stated to visit other counties.

Ms. Shiflett stated review PDR plans in place elsewhere including Rockbridge County.

Chairman Curry stated to have agriculture related organizations providing input to the group.

Chairman Curry stated hold a public meeting for input.

Ms. Shiflett stated to see if the Extension Service has a relevant speaker to speak to the group.

Vice Chairman Schooley stated find out where areas are getting the PDR money from.

Chairman Curry stated to send the Task Force representatives to forums and conferences.

Chairman Curry stated research all strategies on the strategy list.

Mr. Howdyshell stated brag about what farmers do and contribute to the County.

Mr. Bashaw stated post information on the County's website regarding the Task Force.

Ms. Scannelli asked if the Task Force would like to combine any of the ideas because they were a duplicate thought?

Mr. Shiflett stated that the committee should wait until later on to do that because there should be some discussion on all of the items first.

Ms. Scannelli stated that now the group should take a few minutes and take the different color dots and place them next to the ones that are more important or on the ones that you would like to go into greater detail with.

Mr. Shiflett stated that he is not sure which ones are most important to him.

Mr. Bashaw stated that all of the ideas are important. He stated that he does not think the group should ignore any of them.

Ms. Scannelli stated that in the future the committee should have a meeting discussing the ideas in greater detail.

Chairman Curry stated that he is interested in seeing what ideas are most important to the committee.

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Ms. Hamilton stated that she would like to have a list of the items and have time to look over the ideas.

Chairman Curry suggested to Ms. Scannelli that the committee wait to pick the most important topics.

Chairman Curry asked that the list of ideas be passed out at the next meeting.

Mr. Bowman suggested submitting a priority list once the committee gets the list.

Ms. Scannelli stated that some ideas will deserve discussing.

Mr. Shiflett suggested having a meeting to discuss these items.

Mr. Bashaw stated that a list of the items would help when discussing the ideas.

Chairman Curry asked Mr. Cobb if he had plans with Rockingham County yet for the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting?

Mr. Cobb stated that he was not sure if the group wanted to continue with going over the ideas from the brainstorm session or the report from Rockingham County.

Chairman Curry stated that the committee will here from Rockingham County first, and then go over the Ordinances, and then they will come back to the brainstorm ideas in the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Scannelli outlined the Action Steps for the committee. They are as follows:

1. Type/Distribute Lists
2. Rockingham County Report
3. Ordinances
4. Discussion on Ideas
5. Dale Cobb and Staff to Start Collecting Information Requested by the Committee
6. Bring and Exchange Articles to the Committee

Ms. Hamilton asked if the meeting dates can be changed? She stated the first and third Thursdays do not work for her currently.

Chairman Curry stated that they seem to work for everyone else for the time being.

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Ms. Hamilton stated that she brought in a copy of an article and if staff could provide copies to everyone at the next meeting that would be great.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman