

**AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 26, 2024**

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Land Conservation Committee for Monday, February 26, 2024, was called to order at 7:04 pm, in the First Floor Conference Room in the George L. Gordon Government Center by Chairman John Howe.

Members	Present	Absent
Jeff Adams	X	
Joanna Berger		X
John Howe	X	
Tim O’Leary	X	
Benjamin Rudasill		X
Michael Bradshaw	X	

Staff Present: Kathy Baker and Vicki Sowers

Guest: Charlene Thomas (Farmer’s Market Applicant)

1. Call to Order

John Howe, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm and confirmed there was a quorum present.

2. Welcome New Member – Michael Bradshaw (Rock Hill District)

Michael Bradshaw introduced himself stating that he grew up in Fredericksburg and has lived in Stafford for ten (10) years. He was in the Navy for six years and then received his college degrees in Accounting and Political Science. He worked for a government contractor for about 15 years. He said he applied to the ALC Committee because he has worked with the Long’s (Farmer’s Market), knows farming, Real Estate and is a CPA. He also stated that he owns his own business doing canned goods and confections; he said he feels this is a good place to start getting involved in the community and is glad to be here.

The committee and guest, Charlene Thomas, took turns introducing themselves to Mr. Bradshaw.

3. Public Presentations

Deferred to go along with the Farmer’s Market agenda item.

4. Staff Update

• Purchase of Development Rights Program Funding and Applications

Ms. Baker advised that there isn’t a lot to report since last meeting. She said the Moore Property from the 2017 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) applications is finally close to closing, likely by end of March. She said they were granted the additional funds from USDA. They will get a total of \$465,000 for the easement that they will maintain on their 70-acre parcel in the George Washington District. It is primarily forested with approximately eight (8) acres of farmland.

*Agricultural/Land Conservation
Committee Minutes
February 26, 2024*

Ms. Baker explained that the first application on the 2022 PDR round is the Harris property and it has had an appraisal completed. She said that the applicant is not happy with the County ordered appraisal and had their own independent appraisal done which appraised higher. She said the county does not have any recourse for offering a higher amount than the County's appraised value. She said by way of BOS policy, there is no room for negotiations. She has not gotten any word from the Harris' as to what they want to do to move forward at this point.

Ms. Baker also explained that the matching funds from the Department of Agriculture are getting ready to expire at the end of May. That money was to be used to close on the Harris property. If it is not closed by May, she advised that those funds will be lost. Mr. Adams asked if the funds could be used for the next property. Ms. Baker explained that funds from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation are already being used for that property.

Ms. Baker said that the next two applications on the 2022 list, Bell and Long, will not have the appraisals done in time to be able to use the Department of Agriculture funds by May. Deeds of easement have not been done yet. Ms. Baker is going to reach out to them to see if they are ready to move forward. She explained that closings have to occur within six months of an appraisal being done. If it is not, an appraisal has to be redone. She reiterated that she is waiting to see what the Harris' want to do at this point.

More discussion ensued regarding the appraisal and how values are calculated. Ms. Baker said approval has come through for additional Virginia Department of Agriculture funds of \$165,000 which could go towards the other properties if the Harris funds are lost. Going forward, additional funds may be needed from somewhere else as more applications/properties are worked through.

Ms. Baker reported that Laure Hassell with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT -partnership with the County) has been busy. She has been able to acquire three more Crow's Nest harbor lots. These are 2-acre lots around Crow's Nest and she was able to get two of them donated and one for a minimal cost using Northern Virginia Conservation Trust Funds. Currently she is working on a vacant 20-acre parcel that buffers Quantico using Virginia Outdoors Grant Funds and NVCT which would not require any County funds to be used. In addition, Ms. Baker advised that Ms. Hassell, along with NVCT, has put out some videos with a push on social media promoting Stafford County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and PDR properties. Ms. Baker said she would send out the links. She said the videos have links to the County's website offering additional information about the TDR/PDR programs as well as to the NVCT site. She said they are working to get the word out about land conservation options.

Ms. Baker concluded the staff report with a reminder that the Virginia United Land Trust conference will be here in May. On May 14th, ALC Vice Chairman Jeff Adams and his wife will be hosting a field trip to their farm for participants of the conference.

Mr. Bradshaw asked a few questions regarding the PDR program. Jeff Adams answered with the example of his own experience with his land and how the program works. Ms. Baker also offered details and discussion ensued regarding the program.

5. New Business

- **Farmers Market Application – Charlene Thomas**

Mr. Howe introduced Ms. Thomas and asked her to describe her thoughts regarding her Farmer's Market application.

Ms. Thomas explained her vision with regard to the application. She said she moved here 11 years ago and always thought about how the Farmer's Markets bring people together. She said she has been a participant in the Long family market for the past three seasons and with her experience with event and conference planning, she would like to branch out on her own to offer a Farmer's Market to the community, particularly on a Saturday rotation.

Ms. Thomas responded to Mr. Howe's question regarding location by explaining that she is thinking about the Rt. 630 Commuter lot if it is available and/or sharing the Long Market's location/space on Rt. 610. She said she has not obtained a permit from VDOT yet. She was referred to the County first and is following procedures.

Ms. Baker explained that she is getting ready to submit the paperwork to VDOT for the existing, recently approved, farmer's market on 610 as the permit expires in March. Ms. Baker explained to Mr. Bradshaw the resolution that the Board approved regarding the VDOT permits for County farmer's markets. Mr. Adams also conveyed the history and reason behind the required approval. Ms. Baker said she is going to submit what she has for the two approved markets so it can get completed in time. She said once all of the information is completed and details worked out with Ms. Thomas, an amendment could be submitted if needed.

Mr. Adams asked about the number of vendors. Ms. Thomas acknowledged that 75 is correct but could be upwards of 120. She said she is still working out space requirements. Discussion ensued regarding space sizes and requirement details. Ms. Baker explained that the existing farmer's market has 80 vendors which uses up the whole commuter lot.

Mr. Adams asked Ms. Thomas about the types of products that will be sold at the market. Mr. Bradshaw asked how many vendors per category. Ms. Thomas said she would like to keep it small with no more than two vendors per competing category. She said she would like to have honey, artists, candle makers, and jewelry makers. She wants to include artisans. Mr. Bradshaw mentioned produce stands and the number available.

Mr. Adams explained that he had been on the committee that created the farmer's market rules/regulations and the "rule of thumb is, can you eat it"? The other items such as jewelry, clothes, and pins fall into the category of crafts. Mr. O'Leary gave Ms. Thomas a copy of the Farmer's Market Guidelines to review. Ms. Thomas advised that she does have produce vendors lined up. Mr. Bradshaw recommended she reach out to the Long's for vendor opportunities and assistance with the guidelines. In addition, Mr. Adams asked if there are any thoughts on having wineries or breweries. Ms. Thomas said she would consider that and Mr. Bradshaw advised of additional rules and regulations with regard to alcohol.

Mr. O'Leary offered Ms. Thomas some advice with regard to her map of location and vendor layout. He said by getting all of the dimensions and numbers coordinated here, it would help her see and determine the exact number of vendors that could be utilized in the specific area. He said currently the information

is vague. Some discussion began regarding set up, start time, end time, clean up and seasonal differences. Mr. Bradshaw also brought up a consideration regarding the use of facilities. There are no businesses near 630 and VDOT does not allow port-a-potties.

Ms. Baker explained that the VDOT permit application would include the maximum number of vendors. Hours would also be maximum, even if actual would end up being less. The zoning permit is approved for one year.

Mr. O'Leary made a motion to table until Ms. Thomas has had a chance to clarify some of the questions that came up for discussion and provide more details with her application. Mr. Adams seconded. Vote approved to table/defer. 4-0. Everyone thanked Ms. Thomas and offered their contact information in case she needs additional assistance. Ms. Thomas thanked everyone before leaving the meeting.

6. Unfinished Business

- **By-laws**

Ms. Baker addressed Mr. O'Leary's question from last month's meeting regarding the election of a Secretary. She said after reviewing the by-laws, the committee does have to vote on the Secretary but it can be and typically is a staff member. Staff takes meeting notes and prepares meeting documents. She explained that the vote should still be done as to maintain the Secretary position in case in the future the committee wants to vote on an internal Secretary or if staff support is lost. Ms. Baker recommended that the committee take an official vote to elect staff as the Secretary.

Mr. Bradshaw made a motion to accept County staff as Secretary. Mr. Adams seconded. With no discussion or objections, vote passed 4-0.

7. Approval of Minutes

- January 29, 2024

Mr. Adams motioned to approve the January 29, 2024 minutes. Mr. O'Leary seconded. Minutes approved with 3-0 vote (Mr. Bradshaw abstained since he was not appointed to the committee yet/not present)

8. Member Comments

Mr. O'Leary advised he may not be able to make it to next month's meeting.

Mr. Bradshaw said he was happy to be here and ready to learn from everyone. Thanked all for having him.

Mr. Howe said he would be here for the March meeting and thanked Mr. Bradshaw for accepting the appointment. He commended him for his input and discussion.

Mr. Adams said he would mention Carlos Bratton's vacant position to Board Member Ms. Allen at the next Board meeting to work on getting his replacement.

Ms. Baker said she will add Ms. Thomas' application to the next meeting as unfinished business.

9. Next Meeting

- **March 25, 2024**

Mr. Howe announced that the next meeting will be on March 25th

10. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss Chairman Howe adjourned the meeting at 7:57pm.