

**AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION  
COMMITTEE MINUTES  
July 22, 2024**

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Land Conservation Committee for Monday, July 22, 2024, was called to order at 7:30pm in the ABC Conference Room in the George L. Gordon Government Center by Chairman John Howe.

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

Staff Present: Kathy Baker and Vicki Sowers

Guests: Charlene Thomas (Farmer's Market Applicant)  
Rich Larochelle (Rappahannock Education Farm/Fredericksburg Food Co Op)

**1. Call to Order**

John Howe, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:03pm and confirmed there was a quorum present.

**2. Public Presentations**

Rich Larochelle from the Rappahannock Educational Farm attended tonight's meeting just to observe and learn. He introduced himself and spoke about the Rappahannock Educational Farm saying it was incorporated last March and operates a small nonprofit 2200 sq ft farm for local food banks. They are producing about 1000 lbs. so far but hope to get to about 100,000 lbs. of produce donations in the future. Their website is Rappahannockfarm.org (web) or Rappahannock Education Farm (Facebook). Michael Bradshaw asked for Mr. Larochelle's contact information and asked if he would be willing to give a presentation at next month's meeting on his program. Mr. Larochelle said he would be happy to present.

**3. Staff Update**

**• Purchase of Development Rights Program Funding and Applications**

Kathy Baker reported that she is still working with the Harris property. Mr. Harris attended prior meeting with discussion regarding the appraisal process. Once the deed was finally ready, the appraisal was over 6 months old and had to be redone. Ms. Baker is hoping that will be completed by the end of August and final paperwork can be completed soon – the grant funds need to be spent for this property by December 31<sup>st</sup>. Jeff Adams asked if there is an agreed upon price yet. Ms. Baker explained that the new appraisal needs to be done first to know if the value has changed.

Ms. Baker continued to discuss status of AP Legacy property off White Oak Rd. She said the appraisal is done and the deed has been received. It has been reviewed and sent to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation for their approval. It is scheduled to go to the Board on August 20<sup>th</sup> to confirm and appropriate funds. They already authorized the funds; this meeting is to appropriate them. The property should close with 73 acres around September/October.

Ms. Baker said that the Virginia Land Grant applications are due next month. She is resubmitting the same ones that were submitted last year but also explained the shift that is taking place within the VDACS office. As of July 1, the office of farmland preservation has a new office and is overseen by the Department of Forestry. She said she is waiting to see what the funding will look like. This fiscal year they have \$250,000 split between all localities across the state. Funds must be spent within 2 years and even if the funds received are banked, we often lose it. They are working on how it will be dispersed. She is hoping it will be a better program with the change. For now, she is continuing through with the current funds allocated for exiting projects.

#### **4. New Business**

- **None**

#### **5. Unfinished Business**

- **Farmers Market Application – Charlene Thomas**

Charlene Thomas returned for additional discussion regarding her Farmers Market application to be located at the 630 Commuter lot on the north side of Courthouse Rd. Ms. Baker handed out a copy of the application, map and other documents as references. Tim O’Leary asked for confirmation that this map is most current and supersedes the previous one submitted. Ms. Baker confirmed adding that this map shows the potential number of vendors.

Ms. Thomas opened the discussion stating that the map was also updated to show that the market would now utilize the parking lot across the street. She said if the market is maxed out, it will hold up to 75 vendors. She emphasized that she wants to make sure the vendors are not crowded and allow space for safety. She also explained her background regarding the agricultural community engagement and said she is currently taking her certifications.

Ms. Thomas explained that she has updated the rules for the market which will now prohibit dogs except for service dogs. She also said that she wants the market agriculture centric with engaging experiences such as weekly produce highlights to bring awareness to fresh produce.

Michael Bradshaw asked about 1. customer parking. Ms. Thomas said it would be at the corner of the open parking lot across the street. Ms. Baker advised that VDOT will require more information regarding parking/crossing street on their permit. There were additional discussions regarding traffic, crossing road/crosswalk. 2. Will vendors be allowed to have their vehicles at their location spot? Ms. Thomas replied, yes. 3. Facilities? Ms. Thomas said she plans to rent porta potties weekly. She also said there are facilities within walking distance such as Starbucks, car wash and Sheetz but said she prefers on-site facilities. Jeff Adams asked if VDOT allows porta potties? Ms. Baker said she will follow up with them to find out. Mr. Baker reiterated that the Committee can only authorize the permit for use of the farmer’s market. As for facilities and other businesses allowance to use their facilities is between them and the market manager.

There were more discussions regarding traffic, safety and crossing the street/intersections. Ms. Baker said road crossing/location is something that would need to be addressed and said she would set up a meeting with VDOT. John Howe asked Ms. Thomas if VDOT gave her options for other lots? She said they did not and actually recommended she switch from the lot on her previous application TO this lot instead. She said they were concerned due to the popularity and overall usage. People often park and leave their

vehicles in the lot overnight, so they said this one was the better fit. Ms. Baker told her that the VDOT application/permit will require details regarding vendor parking, travel areas, customer access.

Discussions continued with comparisons between previous lot location and the one now proposed along with suggestions for parking, operating times. Mr. Howe reiterated all of the concerns and said she should discuss these issues with VDOT. Ms. Baker explained that she cannot go to VDOT or submit for her permit until this application is approved. She advised that Zoning will not issue a permit until all parking and other issues are resolved. The Zoning office will ensure that these issues are addressed and VDOT has approved before the permit for operation is issued. She said the committee can focus on the market itself. Zoning and VDOT will work out the logistics.

Mr. O’Leary asked about the operational dates and hours that are listed on page 6 of the document (rules and regulations). Ms. Thomas agreed that they need to be revised. Should read September – December; March through Nov/Dec. Closed January and February. She confirmed hours will be 8am – 2pm which includes vendor set-up and take-down (customers 9am-1pm).

There was a brief discussion regarding producers, produce, handmade items and clarification regarding the 80/20 125-mile rule.

Mr. Howe asked for a motion to approve or defer. Mr. Bradshaw motioned to approve. Mr. Howe seconded. Benjamin Rudasill asked for clarification about what is being approved. Ms. Baker explained that the approval is for what is within the farmers market. VDOT and Zoning will work out the other logistics. Mr. O’Leary offered to second with that explanation. Motion PASSED with 4 yes and 1 no (JA). Kathy said she will follow-up with the applicant for next steps with VDOT.

- **Land Conservation – Target Areas**

Ms. Baker discussed the Land Conservation current target areas. She said some of the areas to the eastern and western sides of the county do not have definitive areas or preferences for conservation. She said the Virginia Conservation Trust has their own set of data layers which is like the state database. They layer prime forest, streams, land adjacent to other protected land, etc. She asked, “what are some of these things that the county should focus on and build into a data set?” She said that the Board is interested in safety – curvey roads. She said the purpose is to look outside of the normal PDR program – agricultural and forestry to consider preservation of land that expands to watershed protection, historic features as examples. A few years ago, the committee – through the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, came up with a list and asked for staff to develop some guidelines to be considered if a resident says they have land they would like to put into conservation. How does the Board make an informed decision on whether the land meets the intent of the overall conservation efforts? She said that Laura Hassel with NVCT in partnership with the County is also working on vetting some criteria. Kathy welcomed thoughts to be considered.

Mr. Adams suggested adjacent lands, so it grows. He said the application could offer more points for land that is next to or adjacent to an existing preservation property. Kathy mentioned that the current applications have similar offering for points. Mr. Howe said he feels watershed protection is a key issue as well to lessen the disturbance of riverbanks.

Ms. Baker said to let her know of any other ideas as NVCT has a software program that they use to build out these layers on the maps. She is discussing the use of the program for the county to be able to do

***Agricultural/Land Conservation  
Committee Minutes  
July 22, 2024***

something similar. Ms. Baker summed it up by saying the key criteria needs to be decided. Each property is different so “what is worth protecting and what does that look like?”

**6. Approval of Minutes**

- April 22, 2024 (No meeting in May, June meeting cancelled)

Mr. Adams motioned to approve the April 22, 2024, minutes. Mr. Bradshaw seconded. Minutes approved with 5-0 vote.

**7. Member Comments**

Tim O’Leary - None

Benjamin Rudasill - None

Michael Bradshaw – Side bar discussion with Mr. O’Leary.

Jeff Adams – Advised there is a big change from VDACS. They have made the sale of raw cow and raw goat milk available. He said it must have an approved label with note “For Pet Use. It used to be illegal, now it can be brought to farmer’s markets for sale as of July 1<sup>st</sup> and you have to have a permit.

John Howe – Said he just got back from a trip to Ireland and Scotland. Interesting water system – rainwater reused. Government permits and only allow certain number of gallons to be used per day.

**8. Next Meeting**

- August 26, 2024

**9. Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss Chairman Howe adjourned the meeting at 8:15pm.