

***AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES
September 22, 2025***

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Land Conservation Committee for Monday, September 22, 2025, was called to order at 7:01 pm in the ABC Conference Room in the George L. Gordon Government Center by Vice-Chairman John Howe.

Members	Present	Absent
Benjamin Rudasill	X	
Chad Young		X
Darla Stencavage	X	
Jeff Adams	X	
John Howe	X	
Michael Bradshaw		X
Evangeline (Evie) Council	X	

Staff Present: Olivia Mills, Laura Hassell and Crissy Kendall

Guests: Mr. TeRay Bingham

1. Call to Order

Mr. Howe called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and confirmed there was a quorum present.

2. Welcome New Members

- Evangeline Council, Griffis-Widewater District

Ms. Evangeline (Evie) Council is the new representative for the Griffith-Widewater District. She recently retired from the federal government. She was an acquisition program manager for the Marine Corps where she specialized in acquisitions of logistic systems as well as facilities. She is also a licensed real estate agent.

3. Public Presentations

None

4. Staff Update

- **Purchase of Development Rights Program Funding and Applications & NVCT Update**

Ms. Mills gave an update on the PDR program. The VLCF applications were submitted for the Bell, Pagnotta and Schenemann properties. An update on the status of the grant funds should be available in the next few weeks. The Long PDR property is in closeout status and should be completed by December. There are about \$1.7 million in the PDR Land Conservation Fund. After these projects are complete the leftover funds will go towards future PDR projects or land conservation or easement donations.

Mr. Adams asked if there is any danger of losing funding from VDACS or any other organizations that may be tied to a timeline. VDACS, which is now Department of Forestry, has existing funds that are intended to be used by the end of December 2025. Olivia will ask for a one-year extension.

- **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust Update**

Laura Hassell gave an update on the NVCT. The MOU was signed with Stafford County in October 2022. Ms. Hassell started in April of 2023. She has been working on getting the two-acre Crows Nest Harbor lots currently held in private ownership added to the Crow's Nest Preservation area. There are no development rights available to build on these lots. Laura has been able to acquire 16 parcels. There are still 24 privately owned lots, one of which is going to closing soon. The appraisal value of these lots averages around \$8,000. She has found about half the landowners sell and half of them donate to NVCT. Thanks to the addition of these lots the Department of Conservation has been able to expand their trails system and open a new parking lot on the west side of the preserve. Laura has also facilitated the purchase of a parcel in Widewater through fundraising and grants. The landowner, Joyce Arndt, purchased the property to protect it and now has the peace of mind of knowing it will always be protected. The grant required the county to have an interest in it so Stafford will be a coholder of the easement and will open it up to the public a few times a year for nature walks and field trips. It will be called the Tank Creek Preserve. Ms. Hassell ran a Facebook ad campaign about land conservation in Stafford County and spoke at Supervisor Diggs' townhall meeting to answer questions about the PDR program. The BOS recently approved the renewal of the MOU, increasing it to four years and increasing the funding. She and Olivia will be attending the Rappahannock River Roundtable symposium at Woolen Mill in Fredericksburg on October 15th to discuss Stafford's PDR program. They will be hosting a conservation speed dating event in November. They will have representatives of different programs available to meet with landowners/farmers to discuss the resources and funding available to them. This will take place on November 8th at Braehead Farm in Fredericksburg. Ms. Stencavage asked if any of the recent federal cuts will affect the program. At this time only one federal grant did not come in. Most of the grants are statewide or private.

- **Quantico, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program**

Quantico has expanded their range. The county now must only provide 25% instead of a 50% match. Quantico will now provide 75% and that does include due diligence costs. That 75% will cover either the purchase price or the easement value, whichever is lower.

Ms. Mills asked members if they had thoughts on community engagement for the conservation programs. Ms. Stencavage recommended someone speak at the town halls some of the supervisors are holding.

5. New Business

- **PDR/Land Conservation Program Next Steps**

Ms. Mills asked if members felt it was time to open another round of PDR programs. There is currently \$1.3 million available.

Jeff Adams made a motion to proceed on a new round based on the available funds. Ms. Stencavage seconded the motion. She feels it's a good time while people are concerned with the influx of data centers. Motion passed, 5/0.

Ms. Mills asked for members' thoughts on expanding the funding to other initiatives outside of PDR, maybe for land donations. Would they like to change the 20-acre minimum? Mr. Adams wonders if going after 21-acre properties that could only fit 3 houses now is even worth the work. Ms. Stencavage wondered if there was any way to protect the watershed area. Mr. Howe felt it would be a good idea to review the criteria and how the properties are scored. Ms. Stencavage asked if expert in environmental protection could be invited to consult on the review so they know what should be included. Ms. Hassell discussed the comparison of PDR v donated easements. More conservation could happen if the use of PDR funds could be broadened. Upfront cost for PDRs can turn people away from proceeding, though tax credits and federal tax breaks can help recover some of these costs. Restructuring how the

***Agricultural/Land Conservation
Committee Minutes
September 22, 2025***

funds are used could help ease the applicants costs and help make the application process happen faster. No decision was made on restructuring and will be discussed at the next meeting.

- **Farmers Market Application**

Mr. Bingham would like to open a Farmer's Market at 2063 Richmond Highway. This is a 2-acre property with a large commercial building. The building will require 36 dedicated parking spots. Mr. Bingham would like to operate 6 days a week with several smaller vendors selecting their own hours so not all vendors would be operating at the same time. He hopes to sell coconuts, watermelon, fresh farm produce, meats, cheeses, breads, plants, flowers et cetera. He would like to get an obligation from 24 vendors prior to start-up and would like to open in two weeks. Mr. Bingham will promote the Farmer's Market on all social media platforms. He has also spoken with vendors at other markets to drum up business. He plans to make this a year-round market. Mr. Bingham hopes to make this a 501-3C program based on agricultural and academics. The nonprofit will help fund sports and academic programs for local children. He is in the process of purchasing a property on Courthouse Road for "you-pick" and outdoor classroom programs but wants to get started at this location to get established. Mr. Howe reminded Mr. Bingham that vendors would need to only sell Virginia products and operate within a 120-mile radius. Mr. Adams recommended Mr. Bingham pick a set day and set times instead of 8am-8pm 6 days a week. He also feels vendor set-up needs to be at the same time, not random times due to safety and logistics. Mr. Bingham is targeting vendors who are looking to work during the work week, not to take vendors from the markets they are committed on the weekends. He is looking at the sheds that are currently on the property to possibly convert those to semi-permanent locations where a vendor wouldn't have to break down and set up daily. He would also like to have vendors offering food selections during the work week. Mr. Adams pointed out that 80% of items sold at farmers' markets must be something you can eat or consume. Clothing, jewelry, hats, ceramics are not appropriate. Coconuts are not grown in Virginia so they could not be sold. Mr. Bingham said he is willing to work within those rules. Mr. Howe wondered if the county would have issues with the outbuildings. Mr. Adams warned that starting a market this time of year would be an uphill battle due to lack of produce. He also recommended setting up on the asphalt as opposed to the grassy area. One last concern, 8 pm is too late during winter. It gets dark early and there is no lighting at that location.

The Commission asked that Mr. Bingham come back to the next meeting with a set of rules consistent with the regulations, a set vendor list and condensed hours and days.

Jeff Adams made a motion to table the discussion until Mr. Bingham returns with more information. Darla Stencavage seconded the motion. Motion passed, 5/0.

Ms. Council asked if it was ok that Mr. Bingham wanted to run the Farmers Market to fund educational scholarships. Mr. Adams stated Farmers Markets in Stafford Count has to be a private entity so what he does with the profit is up to him.

6. Unfinished Business

None

7. Approval of Minutes

- March 24, 2025

The approval of the March 24, 2025 minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

8. Member Comments

Ms. Stencavage will not be at the next meeting.

Jeff Adams will be speaking at the next BOS public hearing about the silt issues at the Able Lake boat ramp.

*Agricultural/Land Conservation
Committee Minutes
September 22, 2025*

9. Next Meeting

- **October 27, 2025**

10. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss Vice-Chairman Howe adjourned the meeting at 8:41 pm.