

***AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION
COMMITTEE MINUTES
July 27, 2026***

The meeting of the Stafford County Ag/LC Committee for Monday, July 27, 2026 was called to order at 7:01 pm in the ABC Conference Room in the George L. Gordon Government Center by Jesse Adams.

Members	Present	Absent
Chad Young	X	
Jeff Adams	X	
Jesse Adams	X	
Michael Bradshaw		X
Evangeline (Evie) Council	X	
Eric Lint	X	
Gordon Shelton	X	

Staff Present: Jennifer Himmelstein and Crissy Kendall

Guests:

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADDITIONS, DELETIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR AGENDA

Jeff Adams made a motion to approve the agenda as is. Chad Young seconded the motion. Motion approved, 6/0.

3. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 22, 2026

The draft minutes were not included in the email to the members. Chad Young made a motion to move the approval of the June 22, 2026 minutes to the next meeting to give members time to review the minutes. Evie Council seconded the motion. Motion passed, 6/0.

5. STAFF UPDATES

Dr. Himmelstein submitted the comments provided by the Board and citizens regarding land conservation into the Comprehensive Plan. Some notable suggestions were an overlay that focused on environmental resilience and immediate feedback if a CUP or rezone was proposed for a development which could harm factors like threatened or endangered species or have an impact on our major waterways. She also suggested including testing of water for forever chemicals at the

water treatment plants, promotion of pollinator garden signage and increased public accessible land. The new Comp Plan will be presented to the BOS in August.

The PDR application phase is open, and the deadline is in September. The application is online and our community engagement department is getting the word out. She is trying to get a resolution on the BOS agenda in August about the land conservation program and having a grant program specifically for covering the costs associated with donated easements. There are currently no applications submitted but she is hopeful to make the Department of Forestry deadline.

Mr. Young asked for an update on the current PDR properties. Dr. Himmelstein visited the Bell property. After speaking with the owner and understanding their needs she added some additional language to the deed to include options for a horse arena. She also has an appraiser signed up to do the appraisals on all three properties. She is just waiting on approval from the procurement department.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review Roberts Rules of Order

A “cheat sheet” was provided to review Roberts Rules of Order. The main rule that Jesse Adams asked that the members to follow was to raise their hand if they would like to speak and wait to be recognized.

b. Review of PDR Ranking Criteria

Dr. Himmelstein did a comparison between the Stafford ranking criteria and other similar programs to examine what could be considered for addition or removal from our current ranking criteria. One thing to consider is more points if the property owner donates a portion of the easement. She is not sure about the cost effectiveness and value of this option. Other programs offer more points if the owner is willing to put in trails or some sort of public access. Some programs also give additional points for socially disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers and veterans. Another potential criteria item is environmental justice which would look at what communities are most at risk of being exposed to pollution and other types of environmental health risks such as poor water quality or proximity to underserved or historically marginalized communities.

Dr. Himmelstein then pointed out items that could be removed. Owner is older than the average age of Stafford farmers is a current criteria item to be considered. She also recommended removing points for the landowner agreeing to no new dwellings or no further divisions because it is repetitive. She also recommends they look at the century farm designation which rewards multi-generational family ownership and generational wealth.

Evie Council questioned the urgency of circumstances section. Jennifer explained it was 10 points or zero, all or none. Mr. Young explained that the age ranking criteria was put in place to help families who had an emergency need to sell a property quickly, such as medical needs for elderly owners.

Chad Young expressed concern that the committee has changed the focus of meeting in the last year away from agricultural leaning more to environmental. There is a wetlands committee for the environmental piece and this committee's primary focus is preserving open space and farmland. Jesse Adams expressed that he appreciated the concern and definitely doesn't want to lose the agricultural piece but looks at it as adding more of the land conservation environment to the program. He will be sensitive to not overshadowing or reducing the focus on agriculture.

Jesse Adams asked about the points system for the different kinds of waterways and streams. Mr. Young stated that had to do with VDACS (Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services) requirements for matching funds.

Chad Young explained the century farm means the farm has been in the family over 100 years. There are no more than 10-12 century farms in the area. He also stated the owners could reserve the right to take out parcels for dwellings and were given extra points if they didn't.

Jesse Adams asked how the group felt about the giving points based on ethnicity, gender-based or socially disadvantaged farmers. Ms. Council felt it should be all or nothing. She felt like if you qualify for any of the categories you get all the points, not 5 points for this, 5 points for that.

Jesse Adams asked if the current section D, easement for public access or recreational potential, could be weighed differently. It currently is only 14.5%. Mr. Young asked if there is any kind of time frame for owners who say they will allow public access. There is not. If the owner changes their mind at any time during the ranking they would be reranked. Mr. Young feels that if they get the credit for public access then it needs to be in place prior to receive the funding.

Evie Council made a motion to continue the discussion at the next meeting. Eric Lint seconded the motion. Motion passed, 5/0. (Jeff Adam left the meeting at the beginning of this discussion).

c. **Discussion of County Sample Deed of Conservation Easement Template**

Evie Council made a motion to move this item to the next meeting. Eric Lint seconded the motion. Motion passed, 5/0.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Working Group Discussion -Comp Plan review and comments continued.

No further comments. Item will be removed from future agendas.

8. MEMBER REPORTS/COMMENTS

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Mr. Shelton asked if any other members, besides Mr. Young, were members of the Virginia Farm Bureau and if the committee supports the Virginia Right to Farm. He also asked if an owner could build a home on the land for a child in the future. The committee is based on keeping land farming by reducing the number of development rights. As far as building on the property in the future the answer is no unless it was written in the original agreement. Mr. Shelton said developers are pricing the farmers out in Stafford County. We need to something to help the younger generations to be able to afford to continue farming.

Mr. Shelton reports he was able to find a location on Poplar Road for this year's agricultural fair. He is working with the Farm Bureau and Stafford 4-H to get them involved. He would like to find permanent grounds for the fair and other events. Dr. Himmelstein requested Mr. Shelton provide the dates for next year's fair ASAP so the county could try to make the property available. The county said Pratt could be used but just wasn't available this year with the late notice. Mr. Shelton doesn't feel Pratt is the ideal location due to restrictions on parking. Curtis Park doesn't have the parking area needed either. Duff Park isn't perfect as the land is low and wet.

Ms. Council made a motion to add an item to next month's agenda to discuss providing additional support to the Stafford County Agricultural Fair. Eric Lint seconded. Motion passed, 5/0.

Mr. Shelton made a motion to add an item to next month's agenda to discuss Virginia's Right to Farm Act. Eric Lint seconded. Motion passed, 5/0.

Mr. Jesse Adams reported he noticed a smell at the Civil War Park on June 7th. He went back earlier this week, six weeks later, and the water was grey and foul. He investigated and found an 18" crack in a sewer main that has been dumping sewage in Accokeek Creek for at least six weeks. The county did a great job in its response, working through the night to get it repaired.

Dr. Himmelstein reports that there is an environmental management position available with the county. If anyone knows anyone with experience and that would be a be good fit for the job please point them to the website.

9. NEXT MEETING

August 24th, 2026

10. ADJOURNMENT

Jesse Adams made a motion to adjourn. Eric Lint seconded the motion. Motion passed, 5/0. With no further business to discuss Chairman Jesse Adams adjourned the meeting at 8:36pm.