

Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority

Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 9, 2024 – 11:00 AM

Millwood Country Club – Boyce

ATTENDANCE			
Randy Buckley (Chair)	✓	John Hedlund	✓
George L. Ohrstrom, II (Vice-Chair)	✓ ^L	Michelle Jones	✓
Walker Thomas (Secretary/Treasurer)	✓	Bev McKay	✓ ^L
Rives Bacon	✓		

L-Denotes a late arrival

STAFF PRESENT: Alison Teetor, Lorien Lemmon

OTHERS PRESENT: Robin Couch-Cardillo

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Buckley, Chair called the meeting to order at 11:00 am

Approval of the Agenda – February 9, 2024:

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve the Agenda with the addition of Item 7d. Long Branch Easter Egg Hunt and the removal of Item 6. PEC updates from Tia Earman (absent).

Motion to approve the Agenda as amended:			
Buckley (Chair)	AYE	Hedlund	AYE (moved)
Ohrstrom (Vice-Chair)	ABSENT	Jones	AYE
Thomas (Secretary/Treasurer)	AYE	McKay	ABSENT
Bacon	AYE (seconded)		

Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 12, 2024:

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve the January 12, 2024 meeting minutes as amended with minor changes requested by the Authority.

Motion to approve Meeting minutes for January 12, 2024 as corrected:			
Buckley (Chair)	AYE	Hedlund	AYE
Ohrstrom (Vice-Chair)	ABSENT	Jones	AYE (moved)
Thomas (Secretary/Treasurer)	AYE	McKay	ABSENT
Bacon	AYE (seconded)		

Bank Account:

Ms. Lemmon reviewed the financial spreadsheets. Current fund balances show a total fund balance of \$611,819.57 consisting of \$171,955.14 in the donations account, \$237,927.50 in stewardship/restricted, and \$201,936.93 in local funds. Ms. Lemmon explained that the expenditures for January included the fees for Ms. Couch-Cardillo's services and that staff are working to find easements to dedicate to the grant funds awarded from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).

Ms. Teetor mentioned that since the two grant applications for Fansler and Lilly have yet to be approved from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), that there may be an opportunity to use some of the VDACS money for those easements.

Campaign for the Authority:

Ms. Couch-Cardillo stated that the donations were \$1,810.00 from 14 donors for the beginning of this year. She described the upcoming Wingate Mackay-Smith Land Conservation Award ceremony that is to follow this regular Authority meeting. Since this is the 10th annual award ceremony, all previous award recipients were invited to attend and celebrate Tupper Dorsey and Family as the 10th honoree.

Vice-Chair Ohrstrom joined the meeting at 11:04.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo explained that Cathy Kuehner, the Director of Public Information for Clarke County, had invited the media to attend the luncheon and that Ms. Teetor was interviewed by Scott Bradley for the River 95.3 radio station to promote the event.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo stated that the luncheon would be included in the winter newsletter and Ms. Teetor described an invitation to speak at Blandy Experimental Farm about the easement program. Ms. Teetor explained that this talk could either be a substitution for a spring workshop or could be a good opportunity to add a workshop on to the next day. Preliminary dates for this event are May 14th or 15th. Ms. Couch-Cardillo noted that the invitation for a spring workshop would be mailed out with tax bills in late April.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo reported that the CEA had no new donors for the month of January.

Mr. McKay joined the meeting at 11:07.

Discussion:

a. Summer Internship Resumes

Ms. Lemmon distributed the resumes received for the summer internship. The Authority reviewed the potential candidates and Ms. Teetor clarified that staff will make a recommendation at the March meeting.

b. January Solicitation Letter and Mailing Map

Ms. Lemmon explained the solicitation letter and the mailing map. She stated that the letters resulted in 1 application and 2 inquiries. Ms. Lemmon explained that the solicitation letter was sent to landowners with a parcel that is within the AOC or FOC district of Clarke County, have 2 remaining DURs, at least 20 acres, and are adjacent to existing easements.

c. Building Envelope Update – Kerry Hutcherson

Ms. Lemmon described the document she received at the annual Virginia United Land Trust meeting (VaULT), written by Kerry Hutcherson. She explained the two court cases that are being monitored by the Land Trust Alliance concerning building envelopes. She stated that while building envelopes are still not technically required by any sort of legal authority, that the rulings by the tax courts seem to support them in order to protect the conservation values of the land. She also explained that floating building envelopes or envelopes that may be modified after the recordation of the deed, appear to be allowed as long as the landowner obtains approval from the easement holder and the modification does not sacrifice the conservation purposes.

d. Long Branch Easter Egg Hunt

Chair Buckley reminded the Authority that the Easter egg hunt at Long Branch Historic House and Farm is scheduled for March 30th. He explained that the Authority usually provides a \$100 sponsorship in order to display the CEA banner at the event.

The Authority voted 7-0-0 in favor of a \$100 sponsorship to Long Branch Historic House and Farm.

Motion to approve a \$100 sponsorship to Long Branch Historic House and Farm:			
Buckley (Chair)	AYE	Hedlund	AYE (seconded)
Ohrstrom (Vice-Chair)	AYE	Jones	AYE (moved)
Thomas (Secretary/Treasurer)	AYE	McKay	AYE
Bacon	AYE		

Report on Easement Donations/Purchases:

a. Summary of easement applications/inquiries

Ms. Teetor gave a broad overview of the current status of active applications and inquiries for easements. She explained the updated map and table used to track easements that are in various stages.

She gave an update about the Fine easement, stating that the applicant is waiting on attorney review of the draft deed. She stated that Mr. Barbehenn is likely to move on with a different easement holder since he would like to retire all of his DURs on a vacant lot.

Ms. Teetor also described the next steps for the McDonald and Bryant easements. She explained that the Authority would be taking over the Bryant easement from the Virginia Outdoor Foundation (VOF) and that the transfer is likely to be approved at the VOF meeting in March. She stated that Dr. McDonald will need to do a boundary line adjustment (BLA) between the 80 acre parcel and the 8 acre parcel in order site a drainfield on the smaller parcel. Once the BLA is complete, Dr. McDonald plans to subdivide the 80 acres into 60 acres and 20 acres, with the 60 acres to be merged into the Bryant parcel.

Ms. Teetor also reviewed the resolution provided by the Ruritan Club of Clarke County, which is required for the Fairgrounds to be placed in easement. Ms. Teetor explained that the document will be provided to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Approval is required in order to demonstrate that the local governing body agrees to the easement and that it is in agreement with the comprehensive plan. She reported that the Ruritan Club plans to move forward with the Land Trust of Virginia as their easement holder.

She reported that the two grant applications, for Fansler and Lilly, have yet to be approved for funding by NRCS.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Authority agreed to adjourn the meeting at 11:28 AM. The next Clarke County Easement Authority meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2024 at 10 AM in the A/B conference room, Government Center, Berryville.

The Authority voted 7-0-0 to adjourn the February 9, 2024 meeting at 11:28 AM.

Motion to adjourn to the February 9, 2024 meeting at 11:28 AM:			
Buckley (Chair)	AYE	Hedlund	AYE (moved)
Ohrstrom (Vice-Chair)	AYE	Jones	AYE
Thomas (Secretary/Treasurer)	AYE (seconded)	McKay	AYE
Bacon	AYE		


 Randy Buckley, Chair


 Lorien Lemmon, Clerk to the Authority