

# Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority

## Approved Meeting Minutes

Friday July 19, 2024 – 10:00 AM

Berryville/Clarke County Government Center – A/B Meeting Room

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

E-Denotes electronic participation

**STAFF PRESENT:** Alison Teetor, Lorien Lemmon, Brandon Stidham (Planning Dept.)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Robin Couch-Cardillo

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Buckley, Chair called the meeting to order at 10:13 am.

### Approval of the Agenda – July 19, 2024:

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve the Agenda as presented.

| Motion to approve the Agenda as presented: |                |       |             |
|--|----------------|-------|-------------|
| Buckley (Chair)                            | AYE            | Jones | AYE (moved) |
| Bacon                                      | AYE (seconded) | McKay | AYE         |
| Hedlund                                    | AYE            |       |             |

### Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 10, 2024:

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve the May 10, 2024 meeting minutes as amended with minor changes requested by the Authority.

| Motion to approve Meeting minutes for May 10, 2024 as corrected: |             |       |                |
|--|-------------|-------|----------------|
| Buckley (Chair)  | AYE         | Jones | AYE (seconded) |
| Bacon  | AYE (moved) | McKay | AYE            |
| Hedlund  | AYE         |       |                |

### Bank Account:

Ms. Lemmon reviewed the financial spreadsheets. Current fund balances show a total fund balance of \$578,807.67 consisting of \$165,108.15 in the donations account, \$244,013.81 in stewardship/restricted, and \$169,685.71 in local funds. Ms. Lemmon explained that the expenditures for May and June included the spring newsletter, closing costs for the Lilly easement, the Landscape subscription renewal, and paying one of the summer interns. The Lilly easement used up \$40,528.16 of the remaining VDACS funds and, with a six-month extension, the Fansler easement will help use up the remaining FY22 funds in that account.

Ms. Teetor noted that the Authority has received a substantial amount of funds due to roll-back taxes and that the Finance Department suggested that the Authority refrain from requesting appropriation from the Board of Supervisors for the Williams easement.

**Campaign for the Authority:**

Ms. Couch-Cardillo stated that donations were \$9,735 from 74 donors. She requested suggestions for a new landowner to profile for the upcoming summer newsletter and the Authority suggested the Bryant’s and Dr. McDonald since they were neighbors that worked together to put both of their properties into easement. She asked about other topics to include in the summer newsletter and Ms. Teetor suggested profiling the summer intern. Chair Buckley also suggested including an article highlighting how conservation easements alleviate the effects of drought by lowering the demand on the water supply through the extinguishment of dwelling unit rights and reduce surface water runoff through impervious surface limitations.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo noted that the donor reception dinner is on October 11 this year and that she will work on invitations closer to the event. She mentioned that she was working on mini posters and a banner to distribute across the County and Ms. Lemmon stated that she had reached out to the Berryville Farm Store to ask for permission to post mini posters in their store. Ms. Lemmon also noted that the Farm Store is transitioning to new management and will reach back out to the new owners in a few weeks to request permission to hang a banner and to apply for a sign permit with the Town of Berryville.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo explained that she would like to use the “Take a Hike” brochure as a poster at the upcoming Clarke County Fair. She asked the Authority to review the brochure and suggest any edits before paying to expand it to poster size.

Ms. Couch-Cardillo reported that the CEA had 11 new donors in May and June. She speculated that the new donors might be a result of the separate mailing of the spring newsletter from the May tax bills. Ms. Couch-Cardillo confirmed that the summer newsletter would also be an independent mailing and Ms. Lemmon noted that she would speak with the Treasury Department about mailing the fall newsletter with the fall tax bill in order to reduce the cost of postage.

**Discussion:**

**a. Ruritan County Fair Sponsorship**

Ms. Lemmon explained that the Authority has historically given \$500 to the Ruritan Club for a partial sponsorship of the livestock sale dinner for the Clarke County Fair and inquired if the Authority would like to sponsor the Fair again this year.

| <b>Motion to approve \$500 partial sponsorship to the Ruritan Club of Clarke County :</b> |                |       |             |
|---|----------------|-------|-------------|
| Buckley (Chair)   | AYE            | Jones | AYE (moved) |
| Bacon   | AYE (seconded) | McKay | AYE         |
| Hedlund   | AYE            |       |             |

**b. June solicitation letter**

Ms. Lemmon described the map she created in order to choose landowners for the upcoming appraised purchase grant cycle. She used this map to send solicitation letters to 200 landowners in the County that may be eligible for the federal Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) grant. She noted that she had received quite a few inquiries about the program due to the letter she sent in early June.

**c. Summer internship update**

Ms. Lemmon gave an update on the status of the summer interns and their progress with the annual monitoring visits. She noted that the interns managed to complete more monitoring visits faster this year. She speculated that it was due to having two energetic interns and that the Landscape software aided the interns in reaching out to landowners and creating reports. She noted that only 18 monitoring visits remain and that she would personally conduct some of them in order to meet new landowners and answer any questions.

**Report on Easement Donations/Purchases:**

**a. Summary of easement applications/inquiries**

Ms. Lemmon 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 explained the number of inquiries she received as a result of the solicitation letter and the attributes of those properties. She noted that the letter had already resulted in one new application and that several others may be underway.

Ms. Teetor stated that the ALE grant application for Fansler, while already approved, had been sent to the national reviewing agency for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). She noted that the department that handles these applications have had some personnel turnover lately, which may be the cause of the delay for this application.

**b. Weir – TM# 30-A-58 – Grant purchase – new application**

James Weir has applied to the easement authority for approval of a grant purchase. The property is located at 903 Kennel Rd. approximately ¼ mile southeast of the intersection with John Mosby Highway. The property is identified by Tax Map #30-A-58, is 35.57 acres, and has 2 DURs. The applicant would like to retire 1 of the 2 remaining DURs and the parcel is enrolled in use value taxation.

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve the preliminary application of the Weir easement and request staff to schedule a site visit.

| <b>Motion to grant preliminary approval of the Weir easement:</b> |                |       |             |
|---|----------------|-------|-------------|
| Buckley (Chair)   | AYE            | Jones | AYE (moved) |
| Bacon   | AYE (seconded) | McKay | AYE         |
| Hedlund   | AYE            |       |             |

**c. Williams - TM# 14-A-37B – DUR purchase - request**

George Williams has applied to the easement authority for approval of a DUR purchase. The property is currently vacant and located on the west side of Kennel Rd, approximately 1700 feet from the intersection of Kennel Rd and John Mosby Highway. A site visit was conducted on April 19 and the Authority voted to approve the DUR purchase for \$40,000 on May 10.

After reviewing the draft deed of easement with staff, the applicant requested that the square footage allowance for the one (1) single family dwelling be expanded from 4,500 square feet to 6,000 square feet. The applicant has no immediate intention to sell the property but after consulting with a realtor, he would like a larger square footage allowance should a potential buyer desire a larger dwelling on the vacant lot. There are currently no structures on the property.

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to approve either a square footage allowance of 6,000 for a single-family dwelling in Building Envelope 1 and a 4,500 allowance for Building Envelope 2 or to approve a 6,000 square foot single family dwelling in either Building Envelope 1 or Building Envelope 2, if Envelope 2 is moved back to the original location selected by staff.

| <b>Motion to grant conditional approval of the Williams single family dwelling expansion request:</b> |             |       |                |
|---|-------------|-------|----------------|
| Buckley (Chair)   | AYE         | Jones | AYE (seconded) |
| Bacon   | AYE (moved) | McKay | AYE            |
| Hedlund   | AYE         |       |                |

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the Authority agreed to adjourn the meeting at 11:04 AM. The next Clarke County Easement Authority meeting is scheduled for August 9, 2024 at 10 AM in the A/B conference room, Government Center, Berryville.

The Authority voted 5-0-0 to adjourn the July 19, 2024 meeting at 11:04 AM.

| <b>Motion to adjourn to the July 19, 2024 meeting at 11:04 AM:</b> |                |       |             |
|--|----------------|-------|-------------|
| Buckley (Chair)  | AYE            | Jones | AYE (moved) |
| Bacon  | AYE (seconded) | McKay | AYE         |
| Hedlund  | AYE            |       |             |

  
 Randy Buckley, Chair

  
 Lorien Lemmon, Clerk to the Authority