

Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board

Minutes of the Special Meeting of December 15, 2003, held in Jefferson County Services Building

Members present: Janet Stine (Vice-Chair), Jane Tabb (Treasurer), Peter Fricke (Secretary), Shannon Donley, Jane Peters, and Jack Quinn.

Apology for absence: Roger Dailey (Chair)

Others present: Tom Trumble, Craig Yohn

Call to Order:

In the absence of Chairman Dailey, Vice-Chair Janet Stine called the meeting to order at 7:11 pm. She noted that there were only two items on the agenda for this special meeting: (a) consideration of the Civil War Preservation Trust/Department of Highway request that the Board be co-holder of easements in Jefferson County and, (b) discussion of easement funding and funding policy

Civil War Preservation Trust/Department of Highway easements:

Mrs. Stine noted that the matter had been discussed at the Board meeting of December 8, and that action had been postponed to this special meeting in order to obtain answers to questions raised by Board members. Ms. LaVonne Paden had provided information on the issues by e-mail and this had been copied to all Board members.

1. Ms. Paden had stated that the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle would be responsible for the paperwork on behalf of CWPT and the Board and would provide the paperwork to the Department of Highways.
2. With regard to baseline surveys and monitoring, Ms. Paden stated that the Land Trust would be responsible for these in the same manner as with other CWPT easements.
3. On the question of expenses and costs of easements, fifty percent of the CWPT's expenses are met by a grant from the National Park Service. Second, the Land Trust's stewardship fund comes from a signed agreement with the landowner to fund the expenses from their share of the proceeds. The money for the easement will come from the Transportation Enhancement Funds of the WV Department of Highways.
4. The Farmland Protection Board's role in these easements is to act as the eligible applicant and sponsor of the grant monies. Like the CWPT work with the NPS, the Department of Highway funds require a government entity as sponsor. The CWPT and the Land Trust handle the administrative work.

Following discussion of Ms. Paden's responses, the Board reviewed and discussed the draft resolution.

“Resolution

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board, being a “Holder” as defined under West Virginia Code §20-12-1 *et seq.*, is empowered to hold perpetual conservation and preservation easements in Jefferson County, WV. The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board was created by the Jefferson County Commission pursuant to West Virginia Code §8-24-72 through §8-24-84 (The Voluntary Farmland Protection Act) to function as a county governmental entity in the acquisition of conservation and preservation easements. The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board has an approved Farmland Protection Program.

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board recognizes that the campaign of the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle in offering compensation for perpetual conservation easements on qualifying properties in Jefferson County that have a significant historical connection to Civil War battles, advances and retreats, furthers its mission of farmland protection in the county.

The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board by resolutions dated March 3, 2003 and October 14, 2003, has previously agreed to be a Holder on any and all properties in Jefferson County, WV recommended by the Civil War Preservation Trust, in compliance with the eligibility requirements of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection board, and approved for funding by the National Park Service, along with other potential Holders, including the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle and the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District.

Additional funding supporting the Jefferson County Civil War preservation effort is being sought through the West Virginia Division of Highways,

THEREFORE, The Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board agrees to be the applicant/sponsor for funding applications and potential funding under the West Virginia Division of Highways Transportation Enhancement Program.”

Mr. Donley moved, and Mr. Quinn seconded, that the resolution be approved as drafted. The motion passed unanimously; voting members present were Janet Stine, Jane Peters, Shannon Donley, Jack Quinn, and Peter Fricke.

Discussion of easement funding and funding policy: Ms Stine noted that this was a working session to explore the issues.

1. Initial discussion was on how to make the Board proactive to easement opportunities. Suggested strategies were:
 - (a) a continuous process of review of applications;
 - (b) bond issuance to enhance funds available to the Board; and
 - (c) farmland purchase and then resale with easement in place.
2. It was suggested that the application process should include an initial 30-day review, followed by an initial site review, and that the Board should have the reviewed application back to the applicant within 60 days. Applicants should also be able to amend the application following the initial review process and to re-submit the application.
3. It was suggested that applications should be kept on file unless approved for funding by the Board or withdrawn by applicants. Filed applications would continue to be rated *vis-à-vis* new and other existing applications. A reminder letter would be sent to all applicants in the spring to remind them they could update and re-submit their applications.
4. There was a discussion of ranking systems and Board policy toward reviewing and implementing rankings. A need to reflect, in the ranking system, the ability to attract matching funds was recognized.
5. It was suggested that “reverse auctions” be considered as a strategy. In these cases applications with the lowest bids of easement cost per acre would be selected over applications with higher easement costs per acre.

Ms. Stine closed the discussion noting that it had created ideas and shown opportunities for the Board to work proactively with existing funding and future funding possibilities.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Shannon Donley, seconded by Jack Quinn, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.