

**Meeting Minutes of the PACE Committee of the County of Isle of Wight
November 15, 2005**

The meeting of the PACE Committee of the County of Isle of Wight was called to order by Rachel Morris at 6:10 p.m. on November 15, 2005, at Colonial Farm Credit in Windsor, Virginia.

Members Present: Tom Alphin
Bryan Babb
Pete Carr
Dee Dee Darden
Jimmy Oliver

Ex-officio Members Present: Scott Bachman, Virginia Department of Forestry
Jonathan Hartley, Director of Planning and Zoning
Rachel Morris, Rural Economic Development
Manager/PACE Program Administrator
Glenn Rountree, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Tara Outland-Williams, Peanut Soil and Water
Conservation District

Also Present: Robins Buck, Virginia Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

Ms. Morris asked the members to give a brief overview of their occupations and their involvement in the agriculture or forestry industries. She also explained her job as Rural Economic Development Manager.

In the report of the PACE Program Administrator, Ms. Morris gave an overview of the PACE Program stating that the purpose was to allow landowners to voluntarily protect their working farms and forests. In exchange for their commitment to preserve the farm and forest lands, those landowners would receive a payment for the extinguishment of potential development rights on a parcel of land. An easement would be the tool used to protect the land from future development with the County being the easement holder. The owner continues to retain all other rights to the property including the right to farm and sell their farm or forest land. The only right being extinguished is the right to develop.

Scott Bachman informed the Committee of a workshop on Green Infrastructure put on by The Conservation Fund and the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center that would be held January 9-13, 2006. He informed the Committee that he attended last year and it was very informative. Strategies for protection of resources were discussed. Jimmy Oliver mentioned Rainbow Road and the strategic planning that should take place to protect such an area.

Glenn Rountree asked that Ms. Morris share information about the Virginia Outdoors Foundation easement which was taken to the Virginia General Assembly. Ms. Morris explained the situation with the Mary Moody Northen property in Chesterfield County and the need for strategic purchases/donations of easements in order to protect the viability of farm and forestlands.

Bryan Babb inquired as to whether the property may be sold once a contract was entered into. Ms. Morris explained that all property rights are retained, including the right to sell, with the exception of the right to develop.

Ms. Morris reviewed the PACE Program Ordinance, adopted by the Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors on May 19, 2005. She explained each section of the ordinance briefly in an effort to describe how the program is to operate. Included in the review of the ordinance, she also explained to the members their duties.

Jonathan Hartley explained to the Committee that Isle of Wight County is unique in that there are a limited number of by-right development rights and it may be difficult to determine the ultimate development potential on a particular parcel of land. Mr. Hartley further stated that much research and thought will be needed in order to determine the development potential of land. He also stated that he is prepared to share with the Committee, when appropriate, the aspects of the County's Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Morris asked the Committee to begin thinking about how long each may be interested in serving on the Committee since the Ordinance lays out specific guidelines for initial Committee membership. The Committee is to report back at the December meeting their preferences for lengths of membership to Ms. Morris. She will then take the information to the Board of Supervisors for their review and they will appoint specific membership terms for each member.

There being no more to report by the PACE Program Administrator, Ms. Morris moved to the new business portion of the agenda, where she entertained a motion to approve the Committee Bylaws. Dee Dee Darden motioned that the Committee approve the Bylaws and Jimmy Oliver seconded. The motion was adopted with members Alphin, Babb, Carr, Darden and Oliver voting in favor and no members voting against.

Ms. Morris then explained that she would conduct the meetings until the Committee appointed a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary at its January 2006 meeting. She also informed the Committee that she will be taking the Bylaws to the Board of Supervisors for its approval and adoption at the second December meeting.

Ms. Morris introduced Robins Buck with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services stating that he was there to give an overview of the state Farmland Preservation Task Force and their efforts to date with a state PDR program. Mr. Buck began by giving some background information about the many levels of programs and funding currently available including the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection

Program and the local programs being developed around the state of Virginia. He explained Virginia has been missing a state program with funding to address the issue of farmland loss. Mr. Buck explained that through the creation of the Virginia Agricultural Vitality Program, the Office of Farmland Preservation and the Virginia FarmLink program were created. He further stated that the Department of Agriculture recognizes that the best way to keep farms profitable is to keep farming viable in Virginia and the protection of the land base is one way to do such. Having farmers to farm the land is also key. The Virginia FarmLink program component attempts to link those interested in farming with those currently farming or looking to retire but have no one to continue the legacy. Mr. Buck then listed the membership on the Farmland Preservation Task Force.

Mr. Buck reviewed with the Committee *Part I, Suggested Components of Local PDR Programs*, released in June of 2004 by the Farmland Preservation Task Force. He stated that the document outlines the criteria needed in a local PDR program, including clearly defined goals and purposes for protection of working lands, an action plan for education and outreach to landowners, adopted ordinance and valuation process, an agricultural enhancement strategy outlining the locality's commitment to the agriculture and forestry industries, a monitoring program, and periodic program evaluation. Mr. Buck also stated that the document contained an appendix which includes examples of local PDR programs. The Committee requested Ms. Morris send them a copy of *Part I* for their review.

Mr. Buck then outlined the plan for *Part II, A Proposed State-level Program to Complement Local PDR Programs*, which is to be released shortly. He explained that this document contained a strategic plan for the Office of Farmland Preservation. He outlined a few of the goals of the Office: allocating \$1 million annually to every locality with a PDR program, having thirty (30) localities establish PDR programs consistent with State guidelines by 2010, and at least seventy (70) localities establish and fund local PDR programs by 2020. He stated that these goals were very aggressive, but it is necessary. Additionally, Mr. Buck explained that the document also included potential funding sources for the state PDR program. He mentioned the real estate transfer tax, the cigarette tax, and an agriculture transfer tax. He added that there has been lots of input from localities and agencies throughout the development of both *Part I* and *Part II*.

Mr. Bachman asked how the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry feels about the program and the aggressive goals. Mr. Buck responded that Secretary Bloxom felt very good about the efforts and will continue advocating for funding for the Office of Farmland Preservation in the next General Assembly session.

There being no further business and no closed meeting agenda items, Ms. Darden moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Mr. Babb seconded. The motion was adopted with members Alphin, Babb, Carr, Darden and Oliver voting in favor and no members voting against.