

**Meeting Minutes of the PACE Committee of the County of Isle of Wight
December 11, 2006**

The meeting of the PACE Committee of the County of Isle of Wight was called to order by Tom Alphin at 6:05 p.m. on December 11, 2006, at Colonial Farm Credit in Windsor.

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

Ex-officio Members Present: Rachel Morris, Rural Economic Development
Manager/PACE Program Administrator
Amy Ring, Asst. Director of Planning and Zoning
Scott Bachman, VA Dept. of Forestry
Abraham Bear, VA Dept. of Forestry
Glenn Rountree, VA Cooperative Extension

Also Present: Liesl DeVary, Director of Budget and Finance
Neil Clark, Extension Forester
Mrs. Joan Jones
Mr. Ken Walker

Rachel Morris noted those in attendance.

Mr. Alphin presented the minutes from the meeting on October 2, 2006, for approval and/or amendment. Jimmy Oliver motioned that the minutes be approved. Bryan Babb seconded. The motion was adopted with members Alphin, Babb, and Oliver voting in favor of the motion, and none voting against.

Under the Report from the PACE Program Administrator, Ms. Morris asked Abe Bear, Area Forester, to share with the Committee the presentation on the value of forestry in Isle of Wight that is being promoted by the South Hampton Roads Resource Conservation and Development Council. Ms. Morris informed the Committee that the same presentation was given to the Isle of Wight Planning Commission and she hopes that it will also find its way to the Board of Supervisors and the local citizens' associations in the near future.

Mr. Bear gave his presentation on the value of forestry in Isle of Wight, specifically focusing on the economic benefits forestland provides to the community. He stated that forestland does not demand nearly what residential development does in local services, therefore encouraging the preservation of forestland is a net gain for the County. In this region, forestry is nearly a billion dollar industry employing one (1) in every five (5) members of the Isle of Wight County work force according to the 1999 statistics. Mr. Bear emphasized the benefits of forestland to protecting the environment and habitat.

Ms. Morris again emphasized the importance of educating the local elected and appointed officials as to the importance of forestland in the community. She then thanked Mr. Bear and moved onto the next item under her report. Ms. Morris distributed a memo from Gerald Gwaltney, Commissioner of the Revenue, which was a response to a request from Liesl DeVary. Ms. DeVary wanted to know whether or not the Commissioner's office expected there to be an impact to the County's real estate taxes, either positively or negatively. Mr. Gwaltney stated in his memo that he did not believe that PACE participants would experience a change in their real property assessments since the assessments are based on the current sales for that property's use. He further stated that "since the PACE Program is preserving the use of the agricultural land, the effect on the land values would be minimal." Ms. Morris informed the Committee that this memo had been forwarded onto Ms. DeVary to satisfy her initial request.

At this time, the first item under "New Business," the agricultural use value per acre, was discussed. Ms. Morris shared with the Committee the results of the report completed by Tom Tye of Thomas Tye and Associates. She distributed copies of the report and informed the Committee that Isle of Wight County's agricultural value per acre was higher than Virginia Beach's, but close to the value determined for Chesapeake. Ms. Morris noted that this was only the first step of the market study and that once the appraisals were completed then there would be plenty of information to help the Committee and Ms. DeVary determine how much development rights may cost and how to budget for those costs. Ms. Morris indicated that after several conversations with Mr. Tye there was still not a planned completion date for when the appraisals may be ready. As a result of the appraisals taking longer than planned, Ms. DeVary suggested that we look to the Real Estate office to help calculate a ballpark figure for average assessed values on agricultural land. Ms. DeVary indicated that using an average assessed value, since the data was recent, would suffice in order for her to begin calculating the amount of funding will be needed. Therefore, Ms. Morris and Amy Ring agreed to work with Real Estate to come up with some average values and share their findings with Ms. DeVary and the Committee. It was also decided that maybe just using the assessed value per acre of the test farms would be representative enough and that may be a better option.

The discussion regarding other potential costs began with Ms. DeVary asking the Committee to think about the possible direct costs that could be encountered while administering the Program. Those mentioned were: appraisals, community meetings, attorney fees possibly, and surveys. Ms. Morris was to look into those costs and discuss with Ms. DeVary so that she and the Committee can be prepared as much as possible when the program gets going.

Ms. Morris presented to the Committee an outline depicting the accomplishments of the Committee and the Program each month since October of 2005. She informed the Committee that this information would serve as a guide for her to begin working on the annual report of the Committee to be shared with the Board of Supervisors by January 31, 2007, per the requirements of the bylaws. Ms. Morris asked the Committee to look over the outline and make any suggestions as to accomplishments that may have inadvertently

been omitted. She informed the Committee that at the meeting in January she would have the final version of the annual report for their approval and would then share it with the Board of Supervisors.

The last New Business item discussed was the February Informational Meeting. It was decided that there would be one (1) meeting, either February 26, 27, or 28, at the Courthouse, which is a central location. At this meeting there will be a brief discussion of the Program's components and will serve as notification that the Program will have its first application period beginning March 1, 2007. It was suggested that Ms. Morris discuss with the County Attorney all that is planned as well as ask them to review documents that will be distributed to be sure that proper procedure is being followed.

There being no further business, Ms. Darden adjourned the meeting stating that the Committee's next meeting date will be January 16, 2007, at 4 p.m. at which Ms. Morris is expected to have the following items for the Committee's approval: application to enter the Program, powerpoint presentation for the informational meeting in February, a list of frequently asked questions, the February meeting place and time, and the annual report.