



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 18-303, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 6/13/2018

TITLE:

Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Ranking Order for FY18 Applicant Pool

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Request approval of final ranking order and appraisal of top four properties from FY18 ACE applicant pool

ITEM TYPE: Consent Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, Kamptner, Herrick, Gast-Bray, Maliszewski, Goodall

PRESENTER (S): N/A

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to section A.1-110(G) of the ACE Ordinance, the Board of Supervisors reviews the list of parcels ranked by the ACE Committee and identifies parcels on which it desires to acquire conservation easements. Each conservation easement identified by the Board for purchase is appraised by an independent appraiser chosen by the County.

On October 31, 2017, five new applicants enrolled in the FY18 applicant class. Staff recently evaluated each of the properties from this applicant pool according to the ACE Ordinance ranking evaluation criteria. These objective criteria include: open space resources; threat of conversion to developed use; natural, scenic and cultural resources; and County fund leveraging from outside sources. Based on the results of the evaluation, staff has determined the eligibility of the properties and has ranked them in order (see Attachments A and B). Because one of the applicants (Tatum) recently withdrew her application and another (Pulliam) currently does not qualify, there are only three eligible applicants at this time. These results were presented to the ACE Committee, which unanimously approved the proposed ranking at its April 9, 2018 meeting.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Natural Resources Stewardship: Thoughtfully protect and manage Albemarle County's ecosystems and natural resources in both the rural and development areas to safeguard the quality of life of current and future generations.

Rural Area Character: Preserve the character of rural life with thriving farms and forests, traditional crossroad communities, and protected scenic areas, historic sites, and biodiversity.

DISCUSSION: The top three ranked properties scored enough points to be eligible for ACE funding. With \$946,419 of County funding available for this class (carry-over), \$250,000 from the FY18 Tourism appropriation, and \$109,893 of unused VDACS Farmland Preservation grant funds (see Attachment C), the County likely has enough funding to acquire easements on all three properties. The large carry-over resulted when four applicants from last year either withdrew their applications or declined the County's offers to purchase easements on their properties.

Based on the final ranking order and eligibility status of the current properties, the ACE Committee recommends that the Board authorize appraisals of all three eligible properties: Dollard, Walker, and Ruddock. In addition, because Mr. Pulliam may acquire some adjoining land that would push his application above the eligibility threshold, staff and the ACE Committee also would like to be authorized to appraise his property in the event that Mr. Pulliam is able to reach the eligibility threshold. If this is unlikely to occur, an appraisal would not be ordered.

The acquisition of easements on the top three properties would eliminate 29 development rights and would protect:

- 1) 408 acres of farm and forest land
- 2) over 8,000 feet of state road frontage
- 3) almost 13,000 feet of riparian buffers
- 4) approximately 272 acres of "prime" farm and forest land
- 5) one (1) property in a drinking water reservoir watershed (Totier Creek)
- 6) two (2) properties in a Rural Historic District
- 7) one (1) working family farm.

BUDGET IMPACT: Because no easements were acquired from last year's ACE applicant pool, the County has \$1,306,312 to acquire new easements from the FY18 pool. This amount of funding reflects a combination of County funds (re-appropriated), VDACS Farmland Preservation grants, and funds from the FY18 appropriation. VDACS Farmland Preservation holds the County's grant money until the County submits for reimbursement for 50% of the acquisition, appraisal, and closing costs. Funding for the purchase of these conservation easements would come from the CIP-Community Development-Conservation budget (line-item 4 -9010-81010-481020-580409-1240). See Attachment C for additional budget information.

RECOMMENDATION:

The ACE Committee and staff recommend that the Board:

- 1) Approve the final ranking order for the FY18 applicant pool as shown on Attachments A and B;
- 2) Authorize appraisals of the top three properties: Dollard, Walker, and Ruddock; and
- 3) Authorize an appraisal of the Pulliam property, if that application becomes eligible.

ATTACHMENTS:

A - Ranking Order of ACE Applicants for FY18

B - ACE Scoring Summary for FY18

C - ACE Budget for FY18 Applicant Pool