



# Albemarle County

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 19-231, **Version:** 1

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**AGENDA DATE:** 4/17/2019

**TITLE:**

Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Ranking Order for FY18-19 Applicant Class

**SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:** Request approval of final ranking order and appraisal of top three properties from FY18-19 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 sections A.1-110(G) and A.1-110(H) 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, 2018, six new applicants enrolled in the FY18-19 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). These results were presented to the ACE Committee, which unanimously approved the proposed ranking at its March 11, 2019 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 Areas Character: Preserve the character of rural life with thriving farms and forests, traditional crossroad communities, and protected scenic areas, historic sites, and biodiversity.

**DISCUSSION:** Of the six properties that recently enrolled:

- one did not score enough points to reach the eligibility threshold (McKie),
- another is ineligible because it is a commercial property with plans for further expansion (Camp Holiday Trails), and
- a third withdrew because the owners did not agree to mandatory stream buffers and livestock exclusion (Rudeen Land Trust).

This left three properties that scored enough points to be eligible for ACE funding (JD Land Holdings, Edelberg, and Harlow). With an estimated \$831,012 of County funding available for this class (following the acquisition of FY17-18 easements), the County should have sufficient funding to acquire easements on all three properties. Therefore, the ACE Committee recommends that the Board authorize appraisals of the JD Land Holdings, Edelberg, and Harlow properties.

The acquisition of easements on these three properties would eliminate 12 development rights and would protect:

- 1) 421 acres of farm and forestland
- 2) approximately 16,000 feet of riparian buffers, including 5,700 on the Hardware River
- 3) 356 acres of "prime" farm and forestland
- 4) 2 properties that are within ¼ mile of land currently under easement
- 5) 2 properties that are in a Rural Historic District
- 6) 3 properties that are working family farms or forestland
- 7) 1 property that faces economic hardship and threat of development
- 8) 1 property that has an important natural heritage resource worthy of protection

**BUDGET IMPACT:** If the County acquires all three (3) ACE easements from last year's applicant pool, it will leave approximately \$831,012 to acquire new easements from the FY18-19 pool. This amount of funding reflects a combination of re-appropriated County funds and grants awarded from the VDACS Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP). OFP 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).

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The ACE Committee and staff recommend that the Board:

- 1) Approve the final ranking order for the FY18-19 applicant pool as shown on Attachments A and B;
- 2) Authorize appraisals of the following properties: JD Land Holdings, Edelberg, and Harlow

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A - Ranking Order of ACE Applicants for FY18-19

Attachment B - ACE Scoring Summary for FY18-19