



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 21-360, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 9/15/2021

TITLE:

Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Property Appraisal Request for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 20) Applicant Class

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Request approval to appraise the ACE Committee-recommended easements from the FY 20 ACE applicant class

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, Kamptner, DeLoria, Rapp, Maliszewski, Goodall

PRESENTER (S): Ches Goodall

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, 2019, three applicants enrolled in the FY 20 applicant class. Staff evaluated each property according to the ACE Ordinance ranking evaluation criteria. These criteria include: open space resources; threat of conversion to developed use; natural, scenic and cultural resources; and County fund leveraging from outside sources. An initial review of the applicant scoring and ranking resulted in only the Campbell property qualifying. This result was presented to the ACE Committee on March 9, 2020. The committee's work then paused due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, one of the Henley parcels (40-12A) became eligible with an amended application to donate a portion of the easement value - according to Criterion D.1 of the ACE Ordinance (*County fund leveraging*), an applicant may receive one point for each ten percent of the purchase price they donate or leverage. Consequently, staff finds that both the Campbell and Henley properties meet eligibility requirements and recommends that both properties be appraised. Staff will present this recommendation to the ACE Committee at its upcoming meeting, which is scheduled for September 13, 2021 and staff will present the Committee's recommendations at the September 15 Board meeting.

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

DISCUSSION: At its June 2, 2021 meeting, following a discussion on the FY 21 budget, the Board directed staff to conduct an "evaluation and analysis" of the Campbell and Henley properties to determine how much funding would be needed to acquire the two easements. This was not a directive to acquire the easements, just approval to scope and price them by means of an appraisal.

If acquired, the easements would provide or protect:

- 1) 200 acres of working farmland (Campbell is 180.48 acres; Henley is 19.10 acres)
- 2) approximately 8,000 feet of riparian buffers with new fencing to exclude livestock
- 3) 350 acres of "prime" farmland
- 4) over 6,000 feet of common boundary with 5 other easements (including 3 ACE easements)
- 5) nearly 4,000 feet of state road frontage
- 6) eliminate 12 potential dwelling sites

The Board must review the Committee's recommended list of ranked parcels and identify and rank those parcels on which the Board desires conservation easements. The Board is not obligated to purchase any qualifying parcel and is not bound by staff or Committee recommendations. The ACE program is a non-exclusive means by which the County may purchase conservation easements, County Code Sec. A.1-113.

BUDGET IMPACT: The County currently has \$75,619 for the FY 20 applicant pool. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), through an Intergovernmental Agreement with the County, holds \$54,000 in reserve to match up to 50% of the County's eligible easement purchase expenses (i.e., purchase price, appraisal, title search, and title insurance). With approximately \$129,619 available to apply to purchase prices, there may be sufficient funds to acquire the Henley easement, but additional funding by the County would be needed to acquire either only the Campbell easement or both easements, if desired. The appraisals will determine how much each easement will cost. Funding for the purchase of these conservation easements would come from the existing Capital Improvement Plan's Community Development Conservation budget. Funds for the appraisal have been accounted for in the department budget and will have no additional budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board authorize appraisals of the Campbell (tax parcel 99-36D) and Henley (tax parcel 40-12A) properties.

ATTACHMENTS:

A - ACE Scorecard for FY 20