

# **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WORK SESSION**

## **GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM**

**MAY 24, 2011 - 4 P.M.**

**A. Call to Order**

**B. Roll Call**

**C. Board Discussions**

1. Greenspace ([Memorandum](#)) ([Map](#))

**D. Closed Session**

1. Consideration of the acquisition of parcel(s) of property for public use pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(3) of the Code of Virginia

**E. Break**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 24, 2011  
TO: The Board of Supervisors  
FROM: John T. P. Horne, Manager of General Services  
SUBJECT: Greenspace Land Acquisition Update

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The purpose of this work session is to discuss the overall objectives of the County's Greenspace Program. While notable success has been achieved by the County in conserving important greenspace parcels over the last several years, the Board has not had a general discussion of the subject since 2002. Acquisition efforts continue the Board's previous policy to acquire environmentally threatened properties, certain properties with historical significance, or property where development threatens to destroy a unique community characteristic. The Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program also continues to operate under approved ordinances and rating guidelines unique to that program. Over the years some parcels which were initially identified through PDR applications were ultimately acquired through the greenspace program.

Acquisition funding is available from account balances of \$3,957,000 for Greenspace and \$2,537,000 for PDRs and from \$14 million in remaining bonding authority from the 2005 bond referendum. Under the terms of the referendum, bonds must be issued within eight years (by November 2013) although the Circuit Court Judge may authorize an additional two years.

The areas the Board previously identified as having the greatest need for conservation or preservation were Jamestown Road, John Tyler Highway, and Greensprings Road. Since then, additional parcels have been identified in the Norge, Toano, and Anderson's Corner area. The Powhatan Creek and Yarmouth Creek Watershed Management Plans also identified several priority conservation areas. To date, 1,314 acres have been conserved by the program through a combination of easements and outright purchase.

Previous Greenspace Land Acquisition Recommendations

When the greenspace program was originally developed, a matrix was used to assist staff and the Board in evaluating and ranking an initial set of potential properties. Criteria included the following:

- Parcel status (if it was for sale or threatened by development)
- Significance of the site (are there natural, scenic, historic, or cultural qualities which make this site unique), community character issues (does it affect the fabric, character, or heritage of a community)
- Other factors (such as multiple priority factors or alternative means of acquisition)

The planning documents that contributed to these categories included the Comprehensive Plan, Greenways Master Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, historical and archaeological studies, Watershed Management Plans, and specific recommendations from the Board, Planning Commission, and citizens. Examples of purchases that were driven by these other policy documents include timber buffers on Route 5, Chickahominy Riverfront Park, and the Whitehall Tavern historical preservation easements.

### Current Status of Potential Greenspace Parcels

The County has had considerable success in conserving the highest priority parcels on the previous priority list. Eight of the top 10 parcels have been acquired. Of the two remaining parcels, staff has been in frequent contact with one owner to make sure he is aware of the County's interest. Staff is recommending removal of the other parcel because the conservation objectives have been achieved by other means. Over 60 additional parcels have been identified in earlier discussions with the Board. Several of these have also been acquired or conserved in other ways and several parcels have been purchased for conservation based on specific opportunities that have arisen over the years.

### Powhatan Creek and Yarmouth Creek Watershed Management Plans Conservation Recommendations

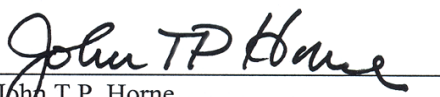
These watershed management plans contain conservation areas among many other recommendations. Over 60 parcels are contained within the conservation areas. The criteria used to identify these areas include protection of water quality in watershed streams, protection of identified rare or endangered species, and preservation of rare ecological areas. The Plans promote the conservation of these areas, but in no way assume that the only way to achieve that is County acquisition. Where County acquisition is involved, conservation easements are much more likely than fee simple purchase. Attached is a map showing the general location of the Conservation Areas.

### Administrative Issues

Two issues have arisen with budgetary challenges in recent years. Staffing for active pursuit of priority parcels has decreased. The General Services Manager remains the primary staff person responsible for activities, with some staff assistance from Development Management. As specific acquisition opportunities arise, a wider range of staff from FMS, County Attorney's Office, and County Administration become involved. Staff is currently discussing measures to increase efforts to pursue greenspace priorities.

Another issue is the systematic monitoring of lands acquired through the program. Many parcels such as the Jamestown parcels, Mainland Farm, and Chickahominy Riverfront Park are actively monitored and managed by staff. Many others, however, don't receive the necessary monitoring. Staff has attempted to identify a local partner who would be interested in a monitoring contract, but has not been successful to date. As more lands are acquired, monitoring will be a growing need. Existing County field staff may be used to increase monitoring.

Finally, staff would note that County acquisition or land or easements are not the only tools available for land conservation in the County. Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs), easements to other public and private organizations, zoning, environmental regulations, and a variety of other measures can be effective. Private landowner stewardship is also critical to success in the community. If County acquisition is the most appropriate initial conservation technique, long-term redeployment of certain properties, with the necessary protections, should be considered. All these additional measures are ongoing.

  
John T.P. Horne

JTPH/nb

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Attachment

