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Virginia Outdoors Foundation
Retreat Meeting for Policy and Strategic Planning Update
September 20, 2002
The Aldie Mill, Aldie, Virginia

Trustees present: Mr. Frank Kilgore, Chairman, Dr. Rupert Cutler, Ms. Katherine Imhoff, Mr. Charles Seilheimer, and Mr. Paul Ziluca. Trustees absent: Ms. Jill Holtzman and Dr. Charles K. Rowley.

VOF Staff Present: Tamara Vance, Executive Director, Sherry Buttrick, Faye Cooper, Kristin Ford, Leslie Grayson, Glenn LaFantasie, Leslie Trew and Estie Thomas. Also in attendance were Mr. Fred Fisher, Assistant Attorney General, Mary Heinrich and Allison Deets from American Farmland Trust and David Hanna from Piedmont Environmental Council.

Chairman Kilgore convened the meeting at 10:12 am. He appointed Ms. Vance as Secretary of the Meeting and she confirmed that there was a quorum present.

Mr. Cutler made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2002 Trustee Meeting. Mr. Ziluca requested the following changes: directly after convening the meeting add "Chairman Ziluca announced the appointment of Mr. Frank Kilgore as the new Chairman effective as of 1 July 2002"; on page 4, paragraph 2, 8th line, change to "the Chairman requested...", and page 7, line 4 of the Proposed Special Project section should read, "The Chairman requested the staff to provide additional information and to bring proposals up for consideration at the September Planning Meeting". The motion to accept the minutes with the above changes was approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Vance presented a report comparing VOF with land trusts across the nation in terms of easement projects and staffing levels. She answered questions from the Trustees concerning VOF's funding and accomplishments as compared to the other leading land trusts. There followed discussions on streamlining procedures, VOF's current budget and fundraising goals.

Mr. Kilgore outlined his idea designed to improve the efficiency of Trustee Meetings by reducing the presentation time for those proposals which follow the standard template and guidelines and are considered on the "consent" agenda. The Chairman directed the staff to work with that idea in the upcoming October meeting. After discussion concerning staff workloads and the need to devote appropriate attention to each easement project, Ms. Imhoff made a motion to name November 6, 2002 as the last day for acceptance of easements for the December Trustee Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Seilheimer indicated that staff should begin publicizing this deadline to lawyers and interested landowners.

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In discussions concerning VOF's fundraising needs, Mr. Seilheimer stated a desire to help with some of the associated duties. He and Ms. Imhoff said that they would work on that project in the next few months with Tamara Vance.

Ms. Vance asked Ms. Thomas to update the Trustees on recent improvements in VOF's monitoring program. Ms. Thomas described her studies of various other monitoring programs used across the country. She detailed the new protocol for VOF staff and highlighted the two training workshops held for staff. Mr. Kilgore requested that the staff study ways in which volunteers could be used effectively in monitoring.

The Aldie Mill Project

Mr. Glenn LaFantasie presented an overview of the history of the Aldie Mill project and showed a recently completed video about the Mill. Production of the video was paid for with a grant from Loudoun County with the goal of increasing tourism in the County. Chairman Kilgore recessed the meeting at 12:30pm and Mr. LaFantasie then led a walking tour of the Mill.

Chairman Kilgore reconvened the meeting at 1:21 pm.

Mr. Fred Fisher briefed the Trustees on the Freedom of Information Act and the Conflict of Interest Act. Mr. Kilgore requested that each Trustee read the Acts and certify their understanding of both. He clarified that the FOIA as applied to email required that Trustees direct questions, concerns and all communications through VOF staff rather than only among themselves.

Mr. Ziluca related his concerns about Aldie Mill especially repairs urgently needed to the dam, the problem of VOF's legal access to the millrace area, and the issue of Ned Douglas and his access to the Mill. Mr. Kilgore requested that a small group including Trustees and staff meet on the above issues at the end of the day.

Public Input Session

Chairman Kilgore opened the public input portion of the meeting and welcomed any guests to address the Trustees.

Ms. Mary Heinrich with American Farmland Trust addressed the Trustees on the Federal Farmland Protection Program. She indicated that she had previous experience with the program and encouraged VOF to utilize the program.

Mr. David Hanna from PEC expressed concern over the proposed clarification to the VOF guidelines. He questioned the current recommended allowable division of a 299 acre into only 2 parcels and opined that the policy might discourage many landowners. Mr. Hanna went on to say that PEC is supportive of co-holding but is sensitive to the added staff workload associated with co-holding.

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Ms. Vance presented an update on the Federal Farmland Protection Program cooperative agreement. She briefly explained the two sticking points in the agreement – the requirement for conservation plans and the recapture clause holding VOF liable for the return of disbursed funds in the event of default on the agreement by the landowner. She explained that the recapture clause only applies up to the time the money is passed to the landowner. Ms. Vance went on to explain that both VOF and the USDA had agreed to the local soil and water districts writing and monitoring the required conservation plans. Further, they had agreed that VOF and USDA could decide on enforcement issues independently. Ms. Vance expressed her approval of the agreement and recommended that the Trustees approve participation in the program.

Ms. Imhoff made a motion to approve participation in the Federal Farmland Protection Program. The motion was approved unanimously.

PROPOSED SPECIAL PROJECT AREA DESIGNATION- Eastern Shore

Ms. Trew presented the details of the proposed “Special Project Area” designation for the Eastern shore area, specifically Accomack and Northampton Counties. She explained that there was a need in that area for easement language that was geared to protect smaller parcels including migratory bird habitat and food sources. She highlighted the increasing pace of development on the shore because of the lowered toll and confirmed that The Nature Conservancy has asked VOF to get involved in the area in cooperation with their Virginia Coastal Reserve Program. Ms. Trew reminded the Trustees that VOF has the power to make a provision for a special project area designation in the Guidelines. Ms. Trew requested that the Trustees approve a revision to the Guidelines that would apply only to Accomack and Northampton Counties and include the smaller parcel requirements and protection for migratory bird habitat and food sources.

Ms. Imhoff made a motion to approve the “Special Project Area” designation for Accomack and Northampton Counties to incorporate smaller parcel sizes and migratory bird habitat protections. The motion carried with Mr. Ziluca dissenting. He felt that insufficient research had been presented on the various other possible high priority special project designations and the staff personnel resources needed to serve the special project area.

Ms. Vance opened a discussion on the issue of VOF co-holding easements with other organizations. Ms. Vance outlined the pros and cons of the issue for the new Trustees and described VOF’s ongoing attempts to produce a standard policy on the issue. After some discussion, Mr. Kilgore requested that the overall policy be tabled for a future meeting and directed the staff to continue to bring proposals before the Trustees to be judged on a case-by-case basis in the meantime.

Ms. Grayson presented the proposed clarifications of the Guidelines to the Trustees. She explained that the current Guidelines were approved in 1997. She expressed a general desire from the staff to have more restrictive parcel density guidelines to begin the initial discussion

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with an interested landowner. After some discussion, Mr. Kilgore requested that the Trustees and staff be prepared to discuss the issue further at a future meeting.

Ms. Vance presented a proposed New River Trail Fund. She explained that a local citizen, Liza Field, is spearheading an effort to raise funds for easements along the New River Trail State Park. Citizen volunteers would raise private funds with which to purchase easements along the trail to be held by VOF. DCR staff would assist with the project. Ms. Vance recommended that the Trustees accept the proposal.

Mr. Cutler made a motion to approve the proposed project. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Kilgore discussed the idea of auctioning the Ely property which VOF owns near Big Stone Gap. He explained that after advertising and communicating with various interested parties over the course of the last year two, no offers on the property had been received. Mr. Kilgore offered a resolution to authorize VOF to offer property at absolute auction as a method to use for sales.

Ms. Imhoff made a motion to offer the sale of the Ely property at absolute auction. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Vance then presented the proposed changes to the strategic plan. She indicated that the highlighted additions were the staff recommendations. After some discussion and slight revisions, the plan was adopted except for the Owned Lands sections.

Mr. Kilgore appointed Glenn LaFantasie, Ms. Vance, Mr. Seilheimer, and Mr. Ziluca to a committee to work on the Aldie Mill plan section.

Chairman Kilgore adjourned the meeting at 4:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Estie Thomas

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