

City of Alexandria, Virginia

REVISED MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2007
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*
SUBJECT: REVISED POTENTIAL PROPOSED VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION
EASEMENT SITES

ISSUE: Revised potential proposed voluntary conservation easement sites in the City of Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: Following the public hearing, that City Council:

- (1) Receive the revised list of 2007 Voluntary Conservation Easement Sites included within this report, reflecting the removal at the request of the property owner of 1200 Russell Road;
- (2) Approve the list of 2007 Voluntary Conservation Easement Sites, as the list of voluntary conservation easement properties in Alexandria that Council will agree to consider for possible future voluntary conservation easements by the City; and
- (3) Direct staff to proceed with the work to achieve the goals of the City's Open Space Master Plan through working with owners on a voluntary basis to implement additional voluntary conservation easements.

BACKGROUND: At the September 2005 City Council public hearing on voluntary conservation easements, City Council members voiced concern that there were a number of property owners who had notified Council that they did not wish to have their properties included on the Open Space Steering Committee's Voluntary Conservation Easement list. As a result, staff was requested by Council to remove all properties from the list when property owners had requested such action. Staff conducted outreach to all property owners whose properties were included on the 2005 Voluntary Conservation Easement list to alert them of the opportunity to remove their property from this list, or to keep it on the list. The intent of the voluntary conservation easement list was explained to each property owner, with an emphasis on the fact that the program is intended only for interested parties who wish to preserve in perpetuity open

space on their property. It was also explained that the intent of the establishing such a list is only to allow for the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) to work with the owners if and when they indicate an interest in recording a conservation easement on their properties.

After communicating with the property owners (attached), the proposed properties remaining on the 2007 Voluntary Conservation Easement list are as follows, with the exception of 1200 Russell Road for which staff received an oral request from the property owner to remove his property from consideration:

- a. 2027 Scroggins (oversize lot)
- b. 614 Oakland Terrace (oversize lot)
- c. 614 West Braddock Road (oversize lot)
- d. 622 West Braddock Road (oversize lot)
- ~~e. 1200 Russell Road (oversize lot)~~
- f. Park Fairfax Intersections (including North Overlook and Cameron Mills)
- g. 1118 Janneys Lane

City staff and the Open Space Steering Committee do not believe these properties are appropriate for acquisition at this time, but as part of the City's open space effort, they would provide value to the City if protected by a voluntary conservation easement approved by the owners of these properties. Therefore staff and NVCT have initiated discussions regarding the benefits of a conservation easement for the property with the property owners.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT: Sample Letter to Property Owners

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager
Kirk Kincannon, Director, RPCA
Aimee Vosper, Landscape Architect Supervisor, RPCA
Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, RPCA

Voluntary Conservation Easement Notification Letter

January 17, 2007

Property Owner Address:

Dear:

As you know from previous communication with our office, the City of Alexandria greatly appreciates the intrinsic value of the open space on your property at ----- . On July 1, 2005, the City of Alexandria sent you a letter regarding this property being identified as a site that would provide value to the City, if protected by a voluntary conservation easement. Based on your previous subsequent positive communications with the City, this property is proposed to be included on the "Voluntary Conservation Easement" list when it is considered for adoption by City Council on February 24, 2007. This list was submitted as part of the Voluntary Conservation Easements report to City Council and is enclosed. The purpose of the list is to provide an inventory of open space in the City where a conservation easement might be possible. Since 2003 property owners in the City have placed voluntary conservation easements on their property.

As previously discussed, a conservation easement can be on a portion of the property which does not contain improvements. A conservation easement is permanent, but is established only if you (the property owner) voluntarily decides to provide it. I want to re-emphasize the fact that the establishment of a conservation easement is totally voluntary in nature, and would be undertaken only if you, the property owner, wished to place such an easement on your property.

If you have any questions, or need additional information about voluntary conservation easements, please call me at 703.838.5041, x350. If you would like your property removed from the voluntary conservation easement list, please let me know by February 9, 2007.

Sincerely,

Laura Durham
Open Space Coordinator

cc: James K. Hartmann, City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Kirk Kincannon, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

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2-24-07



<dacava1@yahoo.com>

02/21/2007 09:26 PM

Please respond to
<dacava1@yahoo.com>

To <alexvamayor@aol.com>, <macdonaldcouncil@msn.com>, <timothylovain@aol.com>, <councilmangaines@aol.com>, <council@krupicka.com>, <delpepper@aol.com>

cc

bcc

Subject COA Contact Us: Revised Potential Proposed Voluntary Conservation Easements # 19



Time: [Wed Feb 21, 2007 21:26:06] IP Address: [76.21.194.182]

Response requested: []

First Name: Dave
Last Name: Cavanaugh
Street Address: 4008 Fort Worth Avenue
City: Alexandria
State: Va
Zip: 22304
Phone: (703) 461-3310
Email Address: dacava1@yahoo.com
Subject: Revised Potential Proposed Voluntary Conservation Easements # 19
Dave Cavanaugh

February 21, 2007

4008 Fort Worth Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
703.461.3310
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The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Comments on the Revised Potential Proposed Voluntary Conservation Easement Sites. #19

The information provided by staff in the January 4, 2007 Letter regarding Revised Potential Proposed Voluntary Conservation Easement sites is too vague and raises concern regarding the process used to identify and protect areas.

I suggest the City Council not authorize further negotiations for conservation easements until the

Comments:

staff and new advisory committee is able to assess what particular resources are being proposed for protection by conservation easement and how were the resources identified. From the list, it appears the conservation easement would involve development rights to protect the tree canopy on some large lots.

In the future, there should be a clearer explanation as to why a property is on the list, what specific resources are being protected, the estimated costs, and what benefits will accrue to the public. In addition there should be some discussion on how and who monitor compliance with the terms and conditions of the easement.

Direct purchase, conservation easements, cooperative agreements are tools to accomplish a specific objective. Given the public funding and interest in open space, the public needs to be sure we have the appropriate tool for the resource being protected.

Finally, since the owners are not interested in conveying an easement and the resources being protected are not well described, I suggest the City Council reject the report and recommendations. There are too many other things to do then being involved in "possible, future, voluntary conservation easements." Approving the list could upset property owners.

Sincerely,