

**Open Work Session**  
**Sale of Land Preservation Easements**  
**June 5, 2018**

Ms. Gloria Smith, Planner, came before Council. She said she is here to talk about the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program. She said this is an application submission year, and they have four new applications that have been submitted to be reviewed. She said they have already been reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and determined to be in accordance with the County Comprehensive Plan, and the new Priority Preservation Area that was part of that plan. She said, last Wednesday night, the Preservation Advisory Board met to review the applications and determine whether they meet or exceed the State's minimum criteria for size and for soils. She said the next step is to schedule a Public Hearing before Council because the Planning and Zoning Commission has to take those two recommendations and forward a recommendation also. She clarified, they have to have Council's recommendation to go along with the applications when they go up to Annapolis. She said this is a voluntary program, and, for about the past ten years, they have had more volunteers than the State has had money. She said, this year, it is her understanding that the Governor included a nice chunk of money in the budget to help clean up a little bit of backlog of applications. She said she is not sure how far it is going to go, as that is going to depend on appraisals, formulas, and the size of the applications they have. She said they have some small farms, and they have some that are larger who want to participate.

Mr. Cannon asked where Council will go from here as far as what they need to do, to which Ms. Smith responded, Mrs. Hurley told her the next available date for a Public Hearing is July 3 at 6:00 p.m. so they can meet the advertising schedule with the Daily Times.

Mr. Dodd asked if this is going to take these properties off the tax rolls, to which Ms. Smith responded, no. She said the State buys the development rights, but the landowner still owns the farm and has all the farming rights to it. She said she is not an expert in property taxes, but it is her understanding that the agricultural rate is the lowest tax rate anyway. She said this will prevent these farms from becoming subdivisions, providing the landowners get an offer they are willing to accept.

Mr. Joe Holloway asked, when they receive these applications, and he knows this has been done a lot, and they really pushed on it when they had the building boom, but do they go out and see if these properties are even suitable to have subdivisions built on them, to which Ms. Smith responded, that is where the soils criteria comes into play. She clarified, with the application, one of the things the Agricultural Advisory Board does is rate and rank these applications so they can tell the State how they want the State to dole the money out as far as first, second, third, etc., and some of the things they look at are whether the farms meet the State's minimum criteria for soils, but are just barely developable. She said Council was just talking about stormwater, and they look at that as well. She said, for example, if they have a farm that meets the minimum criteria on paper but is flooded a lot of the year, or flooded during heavy rain and really would not be developable anyway, that is one of the things the Agricultural Advisory Board members looks at. She said the Board consists of some of their younger farmers, but they know a lot about the applicants, such as where they are located, who is farming what, if it produces, etc. She said the State keeps telling the County they want the applicants ranked so they are buying the development rights from the best farms that are developable soils and not marshland. There was no further discussion.

*Signatures on next page*

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John T. Cannon, President



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Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3



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Ernest F. Davis, District 1



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Marc Kilmer, District 2

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John B. Hall, District 4



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Joe Holloway, District 5

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absent

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Matt Holloway, At-Large



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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator