Minutes
Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board
March 18, 2002

Attending: Jack Quinn, Janet Stine, Roger Dailey and Joe Osterman and Shannon Donley.

Others attending: Craig Yohn

A motion was made by Roger Dailey, seconded by Jack Quinn to approve the minutes as emailed.

The treasurer's report was given by Roger Dailey which showed a balance of $3,641.69. No word has been received about the Legislative Digest Monies. The 501 (3) (c) status has been approved until June of 2005. Ninety days prior to expiration, budgets must be submitted showing that the budget shows a major portion of funding coming from donations.

A document was developed and discussed by the board to use at the public hearing being held by the Jefferson County Planning Commission on the Tustian Report. The document is based primarily on the proposed Jefferson County Farmland Protection Plan. Several points were addressed in the document including the support of page 18, section d - Farming and Cultivation Areas (see attached). A motion was made by Joe Osterman, seconded by Jack Quinn to accept that statement of record with changes. Motion passed unanimously. A motion was made by Joe Osterman, seconded by Janet Stine to have Roger Dailey present the document at the public hearing on behalf of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Jack Quinn, seconded by Janet Stine that the Farmland Protection Board meet the third Monday of the month. Motion passed unanimously.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Yohn
Acting Secretary

Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board
Statement for the Record to the Jefferson County Planning Commission
On the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan Report
Prepared by Tustian and Associates

Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board Members
Shannon Donley, Jefferson County Farmer Who Is A Member Of The Jefferson County Farm Bureau
Jack Quinn, Jefferson County Farmer
Jane Peters, Executive Director of the Jefferson County Development Authority
Roger Dailey, Non-Farmer Resident of Jefferson County
Janet Stine, Jefferson County Farmer Who Is A Member Of A Soil Conversation District
Joe Osterman, Non-Farmer Resident of Jefferson County
Jane Tabb, Jefferson County Commissioner

Farmland Protection Board Technical Staff
Effie Kallas, Eastern Panhandle Land Trust
Craig W. Yohn, WVU Extension Agent

Mission Statement

Agriculture should continue as an integral and viable part of the county's economy, landscape, natural resources, and sense of community. The mission of the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board is to implement identified goals, objectives and policies for the protection and preservation of Jefferson County land best suited for farming in accordance with West Virginia State Code §8-24-72.

Farmland Preservation

The need to preserve land necessary for the continuation of the agricultural industry in Jefferson County is closely related to our quality of life and broad economic issues. A strategy for protecting farmland in our rural areas is vital to the future of the agricultural industry, because adverse impacts on land resources will have an adverse impact on farm productivity.

Benefits to the Farmer

Farmland preservation is an important issue for all county residents, and can be of great benefit to the farming community. Guiding rural non-farm residential development in agricultural areas helps to reduce land use conflicts. These conflicts occur when one person interferes with the way that another person wants to use their land. Conflicts are clearly two-sided; agricultural operations can interfere with residential uses, while rural dwellers can hinder the use of land for agricultural purposes. These conflicts increase as more and more rural non-farm land usage takes place, and additional people move into agricultural areas. Coping with these issues can be difficult and financially burdensome for farmers.

New residents to the county from urban areas, who view the rural areas of the county as a desirable place to live, are often unaware of the various activities that constitute rural life in an agricultural area. They may come to the conclusion that some necessary farm practices are annoying, without understanding that agriculture is an industry, and involves some noise and odors, and even some degree of physical danger. The simplest way to avoid land use conflicts is to promote agriculture-related land uses in agricultural areas.

The rural economy depends on farm support services for its survival. As more and more farms change land use as a result of suburban development, the critical mass of consumers needed to maintain farm support services is reduced. Farm implement dealers, seed and feed stores, and grain elevators depend upon a minimum level of business generated by area farmers. As farmers sell their land, and agricultural business levels decline, these dealers are forced to move to more agriculture-intense communities. When support services vanish from the community, surviving farmers find it increasingly difficult to farm their land efficiently and cost effectively.

A number of farmers in Jefferson County are second and third generation, and to them farming is more than just a business; it is a way of life. Owners of farmland that sell their property often do so because farming is no longer economically feasible for them. The pressures of rural development are so great that they find it difficult to refuse the funds they can acquire by selling farmland. However, when farmers can be assured of economic viability, they often opt to continue farming rather than selling their land.

Benefits to the Community

Farmland preservation is beneficial to the community because it preserves an important industry. In addition, an effective preservation effort promotes compact development of rural housing and other rural industries. Compact development saves energy, money, and non-renewable resources. It also leads to cost-effective school busing, police protection, emergency services, road maintenance, and provision of water and sewage services.

An increase in the number of land use conflicts will likely arise as more development takes place in rural areas of Jefferson County. We need ways to protect the farmer from new land use conflicts. Subdivisions often create inefficient land use patterns for agricultural purposes, taking more land out of agricultural production than is necessary. Further, when land is subdivided, but not yet developed, it results in small or oddly shaped lots that are usually not economical to farm, especially given the large equipment used today. A scattered development pattern also detracts from the county's rural character. Generally, these effects are cumulative in nature, resulting from minor changes and subtle degradation in farmland presence, year-by-year, and only become pronounced over a lengthy period of time.

Agricultural land, like energy, is a non-renewable resource. Once development occurs on prime soils, inferior soils or new techniques will have to be used to maintain current levels of production. The practice of upgrading and maintaining inferior soils is energy-intensive, and preservation of highly productive soils for agricultural use is a significant energy conservation technique. Maintaining productive soils for agriculture near urban centers will also reduce the amount of energy needed for the transportation of agricultural products to market.

Farmland preservation programs also provide an essence of community identity and separation, increased quality of life through aesthetic appearance of farmlands, and maintenance of an open-space atmosphere within the county.

Basic Conflicts

Two conflicting aspects of agricultural preservation create the central issue that confounds efforts to preserve farmland. The first view suggests that land is a commodity to be owned, and bought and sold for profit. The value of this commodity is determined by the real estate market, and from an agricultural perspective, can be realized only when the farmland is converted to a non-resource use. Homes built on former farmland are sometimes referred to as "the last cash crop".

The second view is that land is a resource, and has a value that cannot be estimated by the real estate market. This resource contributes to economic vitality, environmental health, and the quality of life of county residents. Unfortunately, many farmers hold both views simultaneously; on the one hand they complain about the problems of residential development in agricultural areas, while on the other hand, they cite the need to be able to sell their land for development if it becomes necessary. A critical decision to be made within the farm community is whether to choose one extreme or the other, or settle on a moderate intermediate position.

Preservation programs that are strictly resource oriented, and seek the preservation of farmland above all else, ignore the reality that land is the farmer's prime asset. Farmers understand land is a commodity, and can be used to secure financing for capital equipment or additional land acquisition. During bleak times, the farmer can resort to selling portions of his land for development to cover living and operating expenses. The key to success for a preservation program is to work with the farm community to develop an acceptable balance between the two values. Prime farmland must be preserved, while still respecting the farm owner's property rights, and directing industrial, residential, and commercial growth to areas less suitable for farming. Farmland preservation must support balanced growth, incorporating and integrating rural, suburban and urban growth, enabling all county citizens to enjoy a high quality of life.

Conclusion

We have carefully reviewed Part A Land Use Plan Section 1(d) Farming and Cultivation of the Tustian report. Specifically the 3 major points discussed in that section of the report:

First, we agree that scattered subdivision development does not support efficient farming operations.

Second, we agree development of residential subdivisions could endanger the safety of the county's drinking water resource.

Third, we concur in the mechanism supporting farmland protection, but the over riding consideration for us is the maintenance of an Agriculture Preserve as described on page 76 of Mr. Tustin's report. We support the concepts of the Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR) and the Transfer of Development Rights program (TDR).