

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- Asheville, NC
- Greenville, NC
- Greensboro, NC

The 2006 General Assembly established a Joint Legislative Commission on Land and Water Conservation to:

- collect information about techniques and management tools to protect land and water resources,
- recommend ways to address the funding needs,
- and hold three public meetings across the state.
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The commission met five times and held three public meetings across the state and submitted its report in January 2007. The results of the public meetings, attended by over 750 people including 189 people who spoke, were included in the report and are also presented in this appendix.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION ON
LAND & WATER
PUBLIC HEARING – ASHEVILLE

The Joint Legislative Study Commission on Land & Water Conservation met on Thursday, January 04, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at A. B. Tech. Community College in Asheville, NC. Members present were: Rep. Lucy Allen, Co-chair, Ms. Katherine Skinner, Mr. Richard Rogers, Senator Snow, Rep. Phil Haire, Mr. George Howard, Mr. Leonard, and newly elected Representative Charles Thomas of Buncombe County.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Lucy Allen called the meeting to order and introduced Commission members. Rep. Haire and Sen. Snow (Western Delegation legislators) welcomed everyone and thanked them for the large turnout from the public and their interest in conservation. New representative Charlie Thomas, Buncombe County, introduced himself and made opening comments.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Ms. Cindy Avrette, staff counsel gave an overview of the Commission's meetings held in Raleigh and the report that was generated from these meetings

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sixty-five people spoke. Approximately 280 people attended. Former Mayor of Asheville, Mr. Lou Bissor began the discussions and urged strong consideration of land preservation. Ms. Bellamy, Asheville's Mayor, spoke in support of the goals of the Commission. Speakers voiced the following thoughts and concerns:

- Population growth and private development pressures make the issue of land and water conservation very timely.
- Adequately funded trust funds are important to land conservation.
- Funding options should be broad-based because conservation benefits everyone. Funding options mentioned included extension of the graduated income tax, bonds, hotel tax, meals tax, impact taxes, tax on development, and a tax on second homes/luxury homes.
- Preservation of working farms should be an important piece of land and water conservation. Farmland benefits not only conservation but also clean air and clean water. Several speakers supported conservation easements. Speakers who farmed voiced concern about the continuing profitability of farming and opposed any tax on water usage.
- Land and water conservation are important for tourism and agribusiness. It is also important for quality of life in the mountains.
- Realtors realize that preservation is necessary but spoke against an increase in the real estate excise tax or a statewide building permit fee. The speakers believe such taxes would increase the cost of homes and be an unreliable funding source.
- Some speakers felt that one billion dollars is a 'good start' for land and water conservation. "Can't fund conservation with a bake sale." The funding needs are urgent.
- Revenue source should be permanent and on-going.
- The farm community spoke against any changes to the present use value program.
- Local participation is a must for a successful conservation program. Some speakers urged the Commission to realize that not all counties have the resources for conservation.
- Several speakers commended the conservation trusts. The trusts provide consistency; enable greenways and establish partnerships for towns.
- Farm land preservation is a must. The State must become creative.
- Strong feelings expressed about preserving land for the next generation.
- Water sheds need protection.
- Forestry needs protection.

Commission members were pleased and overwhelmed at the support and attendance at this public hearing.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION ON
LAND & WATER
PUBLIC HEARING – GREENVILLE, NC

The Joint Legislative Study Commission on Land & Water Conservation met on Monday January 08, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at Pitt Community College in Greenville, NC. Legislative members present were: Senator Charlie Albertson, Rep. Lucy Allen, Co-chair, Rep. Wainwright, Ms. Katherine Skinner, Mr. George Howard, Mr. Larry Tombaugh. Reps. McLawhorn and Warren who represent this district were also present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Lucy Allen called the meeting to order and asked for a moment of silence in memory of Sen. Robert Holloman and Rep. Howard Hunter who passed away over the weekend. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for the large turnout from the public and their interest in conservation.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Ms. Cindy Avrette, staff counsel, gave an overview of the Commission's meetings held in Raleigh and the report that was generated from these meetings.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was an over whelming response and interest. Approximately 175 to 200 people attended and 45 people spoke. Speakers voiced the following thoughts and concerns:

- Land and water conservation is an important investment in our State and its future. The State's conservation needs should be recognized, examined, and addressed.
- Conservation necessary for recreational needs. Examples of conservation and recreation include the 'rail trails.'
- State parks have been successful in conserving our State's natural beauty.
- A key component of conservation programs must be the maintaining of open farm land.
- Conservation of working lands is important because they continue to be part of the State's tax base and income growth.

- Conservation funding options must be friendly to farmers since farmland and farming is a key element to land and water conservation. The farming community supports term-limited conservation easements.
- Farming community opposes any taxation of water usage.
- Historic buildings need to be preserved.
- Some speakers expressed concern over the counties' tax base. Encouraged working conservation lands.
- Supportive of conservation programs and funding of the mountain to sea trail that DENR has put together.
- Realtors opposed any increase in the deed stamp transfer tax; the higher the cost of new homes the less attractive they become
- Support good development initiatives. Urban sprawl and development should be planned.
- Recognition that waterfront development has economic repercussions and hampers public access to the waters.
- Farmland preservation needs more resources. Farmland includes aquaculture fish farms.
- Military bases need to be protected because of development around them.
- Local government support necessary, but many local communities do not have the luxury of large tax bases.
- Concern expressed over the loss of wetlands if a plan is not in place.
- Everyone agrees that preservation is important but funding is the major issue; impact fees and landfill tipping fees are passed on to the consumers and the people at the bottom will be paying for this for about 30 years.
- The farming community expressed concern that it was not adequately represented on the Commission.
- Several speakers supported increased funding for the preservation of coastal habitats.
- The State should put more of its conservation emphasis on farmland protection.
- There should be a steady stream of funding for preservation in NC.
- The benefits of conservation are shared and the financial burden should be shared as well.
- Black Family Land Trust works with black family land owners. This effort should be continued and funded.
- Term easements should be considered.
- Funding now will save land for the future.
- A stable funding source for agricultural use is necessary.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION ON
LAND & WATER
PUBLIC HEARING – GREENSBORO, NC

The Joint Legislative Study Commission on Land & Water Conservation met on Wednesday, January 10, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in Greensboro, NC. Legislative members present were: Senator Charlie Albertson, Mr. Richard Rogers, Senator Snow, Mr. George Howard, Mr. Leonard, Mr. Larry Tombaugh, Mr. David Womack, Ms. Lisa Schneider, and Sec. Bill Ross. Rep. Laura Wiley and Sen. Kay Hagan, who represent this district, joined us.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Albertson called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for the large turnout from the public and their interest in conservation.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Mr. Canaan Huie, staff counsel gave an overview of the Commissions meetings held in Raleigh and the report that was generated from these meetings.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was an over whelming response and interest. More than 290 people attended the hearing and 79 people spoke. Speakers voiced the following thoughts and concerns:

- Historic communities need to be preserved for generations to come.
- Trust funds work well.
- Land and water conservation is an important part of the public health debate. Open lands provide more opportunities for recreational activity. Protecting our natural resources protects our human resources as well.
- Need a funding proposal that is balanced and fair to the taxpayers.
- Support for conserving land by encouraging people to continue farming the land. Support for the purchasing of development rights.
- Realtors did not support an increase in the deed stamp tax.
- The farming community opposed water usage fees and taxes.
- Urge state agencies to cooperate to find ways to share costs.
- Support for bond issues. Let the public decide.
- Local and state governments need to partner.

- Support expressed for farmland mitigation. Encourage developers, farmers, and environmentalist to work together.
- Support for direct funding for forestry. Attention should be given to working forests.
- Support long term permanent sources of funds. Support occupancy tax, bond initiatives, transfer tax; landfill tipping fees.
- Allow voters to make decision on how to get funds.
- Trust funds do many good things. The trust funds need more resources.
- Farmland preservation is a must. Support voluntary agricultural districts the purchase of farm land rights, and term easements.
- Farmland Protection Fund should be funded with a stable and adequate source of revenue.
- An increase in taxes that impact development are discriminatory towards homeowners and effect affordable housing.
- Conservation needs are great; one billion dollars will not be enough.
- Add one dollar to car licenses to go towards conservation needs.
- Funding between trust funds should be equitable.
- Be cautious on the amount of land purchased by the State as conservation land; finance efforts to support working lands.
- Opposition expressed to extending the present use value rollback period.
- Support occupancy taxes.
- Consider expansion of income tax credit for land donations.
- State needs to conserve lands now. The State will pay less to conserve lands now than if it waits.
- Do not increase taxes on homes.
- Impose tax on development.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.