



2007 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Candidate Forum August 14, 2007

The campaign season for three Board of Supervisors races is officially underway with the first candidates' forum of the year. Seven candidates for three seats were guests at the annual meeting of the Albemarle County Farm Bureau. Over 150 members attended the event which featured the adoption of the Albemarle chapter's positions on such issues as transferable development rights, subdivision rights and tax credits that farmers can get if they are using their land for agricultural purposes. Each candidate was asked to respond to three questions from the Farm Bureau which they did not receive in advance. The format of the event did not include opening or closing statements. The event was introduced by Joe Jones, President of the Albemarle County Farm Bureau.

*The **audio** and **video** is available online on the Charlottesville Tomorrow Weblog*
http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2007/08/farm_bureau_for.html

Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website
<http://action.cvilletomorrow.org/cvilleaction/elections.html>

INTRODUCTION

Joe Jones: At some point in the past I had mentioned that we might try to have a bluegrass band for some entertainment after one of our annual meetings. However, the Board felt with the number of seats up for election this fall that part of our responsibility as an organization is to educate its membership and part of that education is getting to know the candidates for the Board of Supervisors. At this point in time, I would say the candidates would come up. We have nametags at the front and seats for you up here at the front table. Probably if anybody can pick and sing a little bit you'll get a lot of votes here tonight, but Mark Campbell who spoke earlier, our field representative, is going to moderate the forum. He has some questions for the candidates and he'll explain the rules and Corky Shackelford is going to be our timekeeper and Mark, would you like to come up and go over the rules with the candidates.

Mark Campbell: As Joe mentioned, I'm going to be the moderator serving for the candidate forum this evening. Corky Shackelford is going to be the timekeeper assisting me and Corky, since we've got you on the spotlight, as part of the rules for the candidates, we're going to have three questions and I believe the questions have been distributed and are available. There'll be three minutes

per question and we have cards for those, and Corky, if you'd hold those up to the candidates, we have green for counting time, there's yellow for 30 seconds remaining, and then red for time up. I'm going to start on my right side with the Scottsville District and work to the left. We're going to rotate so that every district will have a chance to answer a question first and then also do a rotation within the district so that each candidate will have an opportunity to first answer the question. Does that sound clear to everyone? Any questions?

The first question and let me preface this a little bit. The Albemarle County [Farm Bureau] Board of Directors developed these three questions based on the resolutions at the local level, so they tie into the questions. The first question and we'll start here. Kevin Fletcher will go first in the Scottsville District and then we'll move to my left. **The first question: much discussion within the Board of Supervisors and in public has advocated farm land preservation. What measures would you support to encourage and support the business and livelihood of those who continue to farm that land?**

Kevin Fletcher (I-Scottsville): I would support any measure which would make farming more profitable for anybody to be able to make a living in Albemarle County and I would think that it would be good to try to work out a forum with a group of counties as far as creating a slaughter facility. I think that is something that is greatly needed in this area and I think we need to also try to ease up on some of the restrictions for small farmers in the produce section. I myself have gone up against the County in having a farm store on the farm that I was managing and I was limited to a very small square footage in the barn that we were using. I was limited to only having one sign out in front of our property. You could only have a sign for your farm. You could not also have a sign also for your store, you know, things of that nature.

I know that it took two years for, I guess an amendment to be made, to actually allow for temporary farm worker housing which I think is an integral part of farming today, especially if you're going to be doing produce, smaller seasonal type of products such as grapes, things of that nature which is extremely seasonable and it was a two-year battle with the County that I began and Marcia Joseph was kind enough to pick up the ball and take it all the way through fruition and I thank her very much for doing that and also I think this past year they allowed for a funding for I guess a rural area's representative.

I would also like to see actual the funding for an extension agent. I think since land has gotten so expensive in Albemarle County, farming has now become much more condensed and there's a newer group of people who are getting into farming and they have a lot of questions and I think that having someone readily available to answer questions because I think one of the fastest growing areas in the County is local produce for restaurants and for stores such as the C'ville Market or Foods of All Nations which has done an incredible job of buying locally-grown produce and I thank them for that.

I just also believe that there needs to be maybe even a part of the Albemarle County staff and that is their sole purpose is to work on plans with farmers to develop more ways for them to make money on their land. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Next candidate is Lindsay Dorrier.

Lindsay Dorrier (D-Scottsville): Thank you. It's a good question. We want farm land to be preserved, but we need to support the business and livelihood of those who are farming. We can do that, first, by dedicating one of our County employees which already exists, dedicate that person to agricultural marketing and to help the farmers market their products. We don't do enough in this County to help sell the goods that farmers reap and I'm thinking specifically of the wine industry and the grape industry and also peaches and apples. We produce some great fruit but we don't— The County government doesn't give much help with marketing so I think we can dedicate this employee, this County employee that we've got dedicated to the rural areas, we can focus that person on the marketing of agricultural goods.

Also, I think we can— Albemarle County is now a member of the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development. We're also members of the Chamber of Commerce. We can use both of these organizations to our advantage and we should make sure that we can request— The Supervisors probably should pass a resolution asking for the TJ Partnership for Economic Development to have a taskforce established to come up with measures that encourage support for the business of farming. I'm not an expert on the marketing of farm goods, but I think we've got experts out there. You in the audience are experts. We need to use your knowledge and your recommendations so I would use you and the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development and the Chamber of Commerce to develop a marketing plan for the goods produced in Albemarle County and I believe if we do that, we need to meet more than once a year at your annual meeting. We need to have an ongoing dialogue with farmers and I would establish, if I'm re-elected, I would establish an ongoing dialogue with the farm community.

Farming used to be the major industry in Albemarle County and it's not any more but I think the farm land is still there. We still use the farm land. We want to keep it open. We want to keep it pure and we want the open spaces to keep Albemarle beautiful.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. The next candidate is Dennis King.

Denny King (I-Scottsville): Thank you, Mark. I'm Denny King and my wife and I are very proud to be part of that 2,225 members. We've been members of the Farm Bureau since 1993. I support pretty much what my two colleagues have said prior to my comments. The first thing I would like to point out is I think that our County has not been farm-friendly enough and I think that's the first thing we

have to do. We have to reach out to the farmers and make it apparent that we are a farm-friendly County. Our County is 95% rural. Only 5% is in the growth area and, Joe, you talked earlier about alternate fuel sources and all of this and all of our corn and grains possibly being used for alternative fuels. What about America's food chain? You all have a big responsibility to produce. We eat your products every day and I think that there are few of us who realize that, who realize what you provide this country, not only this County.

And I was at Whole Foods this afternoon and I was pleased to see a small farmers' market taking place in their parking lot. How interesting. This is a grocery store that sells produce yet they welcome the small farmer to their parking lot to market their products. How wonderful. And I think that that's only the beginning, but I think we really have to show the farmer that we are a farm-friendly County. We're not just a developer-friendly County and I believe that the most important thing is that we have farmers continuing to farm and it's kind of sad when we don't see young people going into farming as we did 20, 30, 40 years ago and we have to ask ourselves who will run these farms 20 from today. That's a big question and it should be a very big concern for all of us. And we have to look at things like this. We have to say where will our food chain and at what point will we really be in trouble. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Moving on the Rivanna District and I will read the question again. **Much discussion within the Board of Supervisors and in public has advocated farm land preservation. What measures would you support to encourage and support the business and livelihood of those who continue to farm that land?** And that would be Marcia Joseph answering first.

Marcia Joseph (D-Rivanna): I think we're all sort of on the same page here. I think it's really interesting that the County has decided to hire someone that will actually help support the agriculture industry. I was real excited to hear that [agriculture education] in the classroom is still going on. I know that CATEC is starting a program in horticulture. I know that there's a whole bunch of community-supported agriculture that's going on. The big push now is for organic farming which is fabulous. I think that this person who the County hires has an opportunity now to look at farming just a little bit differently than we looked at it in the past, that maybe we'll see some of the smaller parcels that are profitable and hopefully this will grow like some sort of mushroom, that it'll be able to encompass some of the larger farms, too. I'm very grateful for a lot of the larger farms that have their land under easements. I know that's a huge gift that these folks have given to the community, but a lot of these places.

I don't know if you all remember that we've done farm tours for many years. We haven't done them in the past because the person that organized them is incredibly busy right now which would be me, but we have done it and I was thinking the other day about the farms that we've visited and a lot of them I don't

think are in operation any more. Is Thomas dairy still open? No. So, we see these things go away because of whatever reason—the family just can't support any more, the area's not supporting it and those are the kinds of things that we really need this person to start looking into to start supporting so that these community-supported agricultural places can become productive, so that they can use the farm land.

I've really been supportive of agriculture for a long long time and I think that Kevin's right, that there's a lot of stuff within the ordinance itself that we need to look at, we need to change, we need to make it so that it's not so restrictive, so that people can actually make a living because the land is incredibly expensive and I really would much rather see cattle grazing next door than the houses that are going up next door. That's very very difficult because the other thing that happens to us and Bruce Woodzell, wherever you are, what happens is that when these things go up, the value of my property is going up. I'm seeing that right now. I'm in ag forest district right now and I do get land use taxation. I don't know what's going to happen in the future when the assessments go up. We're all hurting right now and we all need some relief from some of that, too. We do have the land use taxation now. I don't know if there's more that can be done to help people but we really do need to look into it.

I'm glad that Denny mentioned Whole Foods because they did have an ad in the paper several weeks ago that were advertising for people that do local produce to please come on in, they were having work sessions for them and I think that's fabulous and if we can get out there and get some of these other grocery stores interested— Thank you very much.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next is Ken Boyd.

Ken Boyd (R-Rivanna): Thank you. I'm a very strong believer that a government that regulates least regulates best, so I would say the first thing that I would like to see us do is get out of your way as a local government here and provide a convenient and easy way for you to do the business that I think you know how to do best and certainly better than the Board of Supervisors could tell you what to do. That being said, I think it's also very important that the Board provide whatever support we can to you and that support comes in— It looks like things like reduced taxes. I think that we can't let your tax rates continue to keep going up because increased property taxes, even in land use, is going to continue to be a problem for you.

We have in the last four years that I've been on the Board, we've reduced the tax rate twice which has provided some relief but it's not been adequate I think. I would've liked to have seen it gone down more.

I applaud what I heard tonight and that is that the Farm Bureau is working with youth because I think that's very important what you're doing with the 4H Clubs

and to promote youth getting into farming. I think that's an important step that we should support as a government in any way we can.

We have taken a step as all the other people have mentioned here tonight, to hire a person that will work exclusively with ag business and I think that what we should do with that individual is we ought to work with the Farm Bureau and those people that understand your needs and we ought to establish some very measurable goals for our County that this person would work towards. I don't think we ought to create this in a vacuum. I think we need to listen to you all, let you all help us with those goals, measure them over the years and make sure that we're making progress and we're doing it. If we're not, we need to adjust those goals, but get this person doing the kinds of things we want, but this is another step in the right direction I believe that is dealing with support for the farming community and not regulating or telling you what to do with your land.

One other thing I think is very important that I've not heard tonight but I did hear a little bit about is economic development. I think it's a real reality in the farming world today that you cannot— Not many small farmers and not even many large farmers can make it strictly on farming. We need as a County to make sure there're adequate jobs that are available for you, good paying jobs. There was a tremendous impact on this community we're in today when we lost ConAgra because of the value of those jobs and people that could work part-time in farming but needed some other type of income so I think it's to our advantage to provide a good economy here to try and work on good jobs for you.

Again, I'll go back to my statement at the very beginning. I think that we need to support the farming community in every way that we can. We need to provide good jobs for those people that need to work two jobs in order to do it so they don't have to work three jobs—that's the main thing—if we could keep it to two, I'm sure that it would be much easier for you to farm the land here, and I thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Moving on to the White Hall District and I'll read the question again. **Much discussion within the Board of Supervisors and in public has advocated farm land preservation. What measures would you support to encourage and support the business and livelihood of those who continue to farm that land?** The first candidate in the White Hall District is David Wyant.

David Wyant (R-White Hall): Thank you. I appreciate the resolutions that were brought forward by the Bureau. I support all of those in their entirety. Also, I'd like to— And I won't elaborate much on them, but I will point out things I'm very supportive of and I've been supportive of since I've been on the Board. I'm supportive of land use. How do we keep our land and those massive acres that folks like to look across without land use? It's a benefit to us and to them as well, of the other citizens.

Also, our conservation easement. I've worked quite a bit in the past couple of years and the Board has made an initiative to increase our conservation easements. There are a number of programs available to our constituents. I've gone around and talked to a number of my farm friends. I know what farmers like because I do it and I know what it is to be out here in the heat and in the cold when the other people are sitting in the comfort of their house and I've had to stop our Board members at times to reiterate and remind them of that and the difficulty that we have in the farming industry.

Also, we need to be able to have ways to sell our products, no matter what it is, whether we're large farmers or small farmers. You all are pretty good at knowing the international market and the state market, but there has to be other ways and this position that we've created is a lot for the smaller folks who want to continue to do some small-time farming and most of them are probably working a second job, but that has to be coordinated with our Extension Office and with us here in the Farm Bureau and also I think as you look at the market—

When I grew up, we were on a dairy farm. There were a lot of dairy farms there. There [were] only four in this County. There's only one left in Greene County and that's my kinfolk's farm and that's how the dairy farming is going. I have a friend who runs a dairy in another state. He says it's difficult to get milk to his dairy. It has to come from many states away, so we're changing our face here in the County if you look at the vineyards we've got and everything. So we've got to be supportive of the industry, realizing what's happened to us in this ag industry.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. The next candidate is Ann Mallek.

Ann Mallek (D-White Hall) Good evening. I grew up on a farm in Albemarle and I'm glad to be one of those 574 producer members of the Farm Bureau. I'm thrilled that there are so many, frankly. As many people have mentioned, I'm very glad that the County is moving forward with the facilitator for farm land operations and just as the business facilitator has been helpful to the businesses in Crozet, helping them to work on their changes in zoning, I do hope that this farming facilitator will be so successful.

Some particular items I hope they will consider: removing obstacles to farm sales, providing high tech information on new markets where high profits can be made from very small acres if people are growing a particular item which is in great demand in our local food chain, linking retiring farmers with aspiring ones and referring young farmers or beginners to mentors. My father enjoyed being a mentor for people who were just beginning in farming and helped them to succeed. This is a very important aspect that we sometimes overlook and the comment about extension agents is another one, to keep that funding on. Representing County farmers at all sorts of different levels for the market, whether it's state or energy conferences, to help to gather as much information

about warm season grasses and new crops that can be grown for our energy supplies as well.

Also, schools and local institutions are beginning to look for locally-supplied foods for their students and their residents. This is something that our local person can work on as well to keep that going. I think that our local food growers are riding a wave that's carried by the bad news coming from overseas. Many people who didn't pay much attention to where their food came from when they bought it at the grocery store are now looking and driving extra miles, going to different stores where they can find food that's grown somewhere close by or someone they can trust to know exactly what's gone on that crop. To me, that's very important. I've had a garden and raised our own meat for 35 years and it's very important to our family's health. I'd rather spend the money on foods than spend it on going to the doctor and that's all. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. We'll now be moving on to our second question. We're going to start with the Rivanna District first. I'll read the question. **Control of population growth has been cited as a basis for measures such as the transfer of development rights. Would you be willing to support compensating land owners for limiting further divisions of their real property without attaching easement restrictions on the future use of that land so long as it remains ineligible for subdivision.** Going first will be Ken Boyd in the Rivanna District.

Ken Boyd (R-Rivanna): Thank you. I think anybody that knows me or that's followed my record know that I'm a huge advocate of personal property rights. I have supported that in my voting on the Board the four years that I've been on there and I will continue to be that when I'm re-elected.

I do support your initiative as was put down here because it says that you would support the transfer of development rights without easements being required but in fairness, I should say that I've got a whole lot of questions about TDRs as it's proposed. It's a relatively new law and one of the things that concerns me about it is that will we create enough of a market that we realistically can use in this County. If we have this talked-about 50,000 potential or theoretical development rights out there and we're going to create 5,000 transfer development rights, that's going to be a pretty small funnel and somebody's going to get left out and would not be able to take advantage of that.

Now, if comes along with it a down-zoning which is what's being proposed or talked about, the 50-acre rural [lot size], then that's something I'm going to have to think real hard about because I just do not believe in taking away people's property. I think that those people who have worked a long time and earned—spent their time and sweat equity in creating this property, I'm not one of these people that believes that someone who's had a farm in their family for generations and has maintained that farm and protected it in rural areas is going

to all of a sudden turn around and turn it over to developers so that we all of a sudden need to regulate them because we think for some reason they're no longer going to do this or they're no longer going to keep it in their family.

During the Mountaintop Ordinance hearings that we had, it was really brought to my attention how the people— I referred to that as people came out of the hills to talk to us and they did and I think I heard an awful lot from a lot of the people that have preserved this lovely community that we live in for hundreds of years and I for one am willing to rely on them to do it. Again, I don't think we need to legislate them out of their property rights in order to preserve it for someone else. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you and now Marcia Joseph.

Marcia Joseph (D-Rivanna): Thank you. I guess when I read the question it said control of population growth has been cited and I'm not so sure I agree that TDRs are to control the population growth. I think that the population's going to come. We've been growing at a little less than 2% for, I don't know, maybe five years or so, but pretty steadily around 2% for an awfully long time—30 years, so we're going to grow. It's going to happen, so I'm not so sure transfer of development rights is going to do anything about population growth. I think what the concept was that it was trying to control what happens in the rural areas. I'm still not sure whether we have the legislative ability from the General Assembly to do this. I don't even know if we can even consider this.

The concept of easements—I think it's really really important to make sure that any easements placed on a piece of property do not hinder you from doing any agricultural use. I think it's very—I don't know what's happening with the ACE Committee now. I hear that there are all sorts of easements being placed on properties that do make it difficult for people, whether it's putting big buildings somewhere or something. I don't think that that's necessary. I think you're going to have to have some big buildings somewhere because you do big things somewhere. You have big equipment on a larger scale, so I really think that easements placed on agricultural property becomes very—it's a hindrance in a lot of ways. If it's going to hinder agricultural use, it's something I can't support and the transfer of development rights, I'm still not sure where that's going.

I think we have an ACE Program right now. I'd like to see more money going into ACE because I understand that we have more and more people that are now finally finally finally requesting that they are part of the ACE program. Initially, there weren't so many people but now we've got a track record and Jimmy Powell, our first participant, he's our poster child and he's done a great job in really promoting this and I think that we really do need to make sure any easements placed on these things are not something that's going to hinder somebody from actually farming the land. That's it.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Following will be the White Hall District. I'll read the question again. **Control of population growth has been cited as a basis for measures such as the transfer of development rights. Would you be willing to support compensating land owners for limiting further divisions of their real property without attaching easement restrictions on the future use of that land so long as it remains ineligible for subdivision.** Ann Mallek will go first.

Ann Mallek (D-White Hall) Thank you. I have been on the ACE Program Committee since the year 2000 and there is an easement for that that is negotiated with each willing landowner to achieve the best agreement possible. I do understand that there are some people who are reluctant to participate because there are easement restrictions in the ordinance.

So, regarding the ACE Program as it exists now, the current committee is very concerned that we are spending taxpayer dollars and we feel a responsibility that that money be spent in as clearly beneficial a way as possible to make sure that we are not spending taxpayers' dollars on something where we're getting less for that than someone who donates their easement to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, for example, so we are using the Virginia Outdoors Foundation as a bit of a model to follow so that those two programs can go along sort of parallel.

Now, I do understand the— If I understand your statement correctly, I don't think that it would be a difficulty as long as the land is staying in the zoning use for which it's set. There're already other procedures that would be involved if the land use was going to change. I would like, before I promise, to say that I would like to learn more about this to make sure that I understand exactly what is involved.

Mark had mentioned the Farm Land Preservation Act, the \$4.3 million. The Albemarle County budget for this year, \$1.3 million, for the ACE Program has already been raised by \$300,000 from this state program and we hope to achieve another amount, almost that much, a little bit later this fall to be able to purchase properties in round seven for the ACE Program. And that's all.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. David Wyant—

David Wyant (R-White Hall): As I read this question, it doesn't deal with population growth. Population growth is another issue. Transfer of development rights is really moving where you're building to another location. You're transferring that development right to another location, but what you're in essence doing are buying that development right from a rural property owner to move to some other location and it's more like moving around the urban area or something where you can have better control of our infrastructure development. I do not support— And since that's just a purchase right, then I do not support putting other easements on it. In a simple term, you're just purchasing that

development right to be moved to another location. That is a problem with a lot of the laws as I see them today—they always have these other attachments to it and those things make it very difficult for me to support because I don't like these other—

The easement is a total different issue and I've already talked to you about the conservation easements. There're many programs that are available. This would end up being another program that would be available to our rural property, large property owners. However, the devil is in the details of this. As Mr. Boyd has alluded to, there are a number of issues that we have to go through and where there would be down-zoning and if you stick with 50 acres after the transfer.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. We're moving on to the Scottsville District. I'll read the question again. **Control of population growth has been cited as a basis for measures such as the transfer of development rights. Would you be willing to support compensating land owners for limiting further divisions of their real property without attaching easement restrictions on the future use of the land so long as it remains ineligible for subdivision.** Going first in the Scottsville District, Lindsay Dorrier.

Lindsay Dorrier (D-Scottsville): Yes, I'd be in favor of this. I think— In preparing for this forum, I went on the Virginia Farm Bureau's website and I pulled down the taskforce report on PDRs, the Purchase of Development Rights and there was a taskforce set up in 2002 by the Virginia Farm Bureau along with VACO, Virginia Association of Counties and other organizations and they developed a model PDR program and it looked very good. The taskforce did the study that came up with a good report so I would use that report in trying to deal with this question and I would recommend that report to everybody else because I think it's got some good ideas in it.

I know first hand about the transfer of development rights because my mother owns a 50-acre farm in Scottsville District and two years ago she decided to get a conservation easement and worked with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation to do it and I've seen first hand what that does for you. The value of the property really didn't diminish that much but it allowed her children to get a tax credit which for the next 10 years we'll have a tax credit to apply against our State income tax so that's an incentive to put your land in Virginia Outdoors Foundation, so I think that— That has an easement restriction on it, but I don't— I think that you could do something similar to that but compensating land owners to limit the division of their properties, say, from 10 units to 5 units and pay them for that without an easement and it would remain ineligible for subdivision but there could be some compensation worked out, so I think the County needs to look into something like this as another alternative. We need to have as many alternatives as we can to save farm land.

And this is just one more example of something that we can use and that's why we need the help of the Virginia Farm Bureau because you came up with that taskforce and had a 30-page report which is excellent. I think we should implement that in Albemarle County.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next will be Denny King.

Denny King (I-Scottsville): Thank you. For about the last 18 months, I have been a student. I've been your student. I've been a student of the people and I'm approaching my being elected to the Board of Supervisors with no preconceived ideas or no personal agendas. I've listened to hundreds if not thousands of people throughout my district and other districts as well and for me to sit here tonight in front of you and say I have the answer to question no. 2, I don't know if I could support PDRs because I don't have enough information about them yet to make that decision, but I'm willing to listen to all of you and I'm willing to listen to everybody who lives in the County.

I have to agree with Chairman Boyd and I believe this is a man who has sat on the Board of Supervisors for quite some time and I think it's very difficult, especially for me, as the freshman, the hopefully freshman supervisor, your supervisor representing the Scottsville Magisterial District, to answer tonight when I'm really not prepared to answer that question because I want to ascertain more information about it. I want to know more about it. I want to learn more about it, but the one thing that I do want to do very strongly and that's genuinely genuinely represent my constituency, to hear them, to be responsible, to be transparent, to represent them with integrity and honesty and to let their voices be heard.

Six people on the Board can't make government work. The only way government can work is with you, the people. The people have to be engaged and I think someone down here said when they reviewed the Mountaintop, I was there at that meeting and I listened to these people come down from places that I didn't even know existed and what a great education it was to hear those people so I want to continue to learn and I want to continue to hear from all you. I want to hear your concerns, your hopes for the future and what you're concerned about today. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next candidate is Kevin Fletcher.

Kevin Fletcher (I-Scottsville): I'm going to assume when they talk about the transfer of development rights, we're talking about I guess the plan that Mr. Slutzky has brought before, I guess, to the Board and I say that I'm against that plan because of— The main impetus of it, it expands the growth area, then downzones everything to 50 acres. Also in his proposal that you cannot build on anything less than 50 acres, so if you own a piece of property that you've had for

quite some time that's less than 50 acres, you're out of luck, you cannot build on that 50 acres.

And also the transfer of development rights—decided to put a value on development rights to say that a piece of property in Free Union which is a very desirable place is equal to some place else in the County which I'm not going to name another spot because then I would be disparaging a section of the County, but certainly Free Union land prices are much higher than most anywhere else in the County, so for his plan, to me, I oppose that. To me, the person who pays the price is the small person in the rural area. Everyone else seems to make out very well except for the little guy and as far as—

I support the ACE Program. I think that it's a good thing. It's a good way to get reimbursed for the value of your land. I have managed a piece of property that was under easement and I do know there are restrictions and those are restrictions that you can try to negotiate and try to get I guess less involvement by governing bodies and certainly you will have to open yourself up to inspection but I think that is just part of the price you pay just to make sure that you are following along with the rules, so I would say that I support the ACE Program and if you do have the ability, if you are fortunate enough to need tax credits, then I suggest you maybe go through the VOF and that way you can use tax credits if you're fortunate enough to need that. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: What is your position on land use taxation rates? What should be done to ensure compliance with the requirements for designation of land use property? Going first in the White Hall District, David Wyant.

David Wyant (R-White Hall): I'm a supporter of land use as I've already mentioned earlier in one of the questions. Also, this question—how do we check compliance. Is there some change we ought to do? If you've got it in forestry, we know you're in forestry. It's fairly easy. It's a lack of trust I guess is what the County implies by this question. The County sends out letters every so often. I guess the most difficult one we had has dealt with this agricultural and if you're cutting hay or you're bush hogging. That would be the most difficult one, but realize that we're going to be doing— The Assessor's Office will be coming around every three to four years and they should be able to tell that we are in compliance with our land use so I am supportive of land use and also I do not feel like we ought to have any further restrictions on land use.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next will be Ann Mallek.

Ann Mallek (D-White Hall) Thank you. I also support the land use program. For as long as we've lived here and continued the farm use that was ongoing on our property when we began in 1982 in this location, we have benefited from this program. Many years ago before the Board of Supervisors when there was a

discussion about discontinuing the program, my heartfelt plea to them at the time was “but my cows don’t go to school” and that is really true. Farm land that is in production is not putting the same strain on the services of the County and also by state legislation, is allowed to be taxed at a different rate than the rest of the property. To me, this is a wonderful idea.

I would like to see if the County can continue to improve the system. I do sense that there is mistrust, there is a sense on the part of other voters who are not farmers that the program is being misused. Remember that farmers are a minority in the voting population of the County so it behooves us all to have this program be as squeaky clean as possible in order to have it continue and succeed.

We also need excellent communication between the Finance Department and the farmers who are under the program. I have heard sad stories from people who did not receive proper warning that their land was coming out of the program and therefore they had a very abrupt and short-term notice about a drastic increase in their assessments and in their tax liabilities. We also want to encourage care and stewardship of the land but that is something that farmers, good farmers do of their own accord.

I do hope that the program can also encourage an income base. When we were farming briefly in another part of the country, the taxes were so high that people were willing to jump through many many hoops. A certain number of dollars produced per acre of land in order to qualify for land use taxation. This is something that may come our way if we’re forced to— If the program is in jeopardy during the next several years due to voter pressure, but it is an essential program to the continuation of the viability of farming here in Albemarle. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Moving next to the Scottsville District and I’ll read the question. **What is your position on land use taxation rates? What should be done to ensure compliance with the requirements for designation of land use property?** Going first in the Scottsville District, Denny King.

Denny King (I-Scottsville): Thank you. I also agree very strongly with the land use taxation. There are several things, though, and I believe that when it was adopted by the County of Albemarle back in 1975, it was a great great thing. It remains terrific today as well, as Ann clearly pointed out. I believe that several things she said would certainly mirror my comments about the program—that we have to maintain compliance and I think compliance is a real key issue here. I just have found that there are some 90,000 acres zoned agricultural in our County. Some 1,100 to 1,200 acres are horticultural and 188,000 acres in forestry and 252 acres in open space. I would doubt that very seriously, ladies and gentlemen. I think that the County has not done a very good policing of this

program. I believe that there are people out there in our County who are enjoying land use taxation who really don't qualify and who haven't earned that right, that privilege, and I believe that there are many who have come in, made their land appear to be golf course-like and they are getting agricultural tax credits. I find that wrong.

With respect to supporting it, I strongly support it, but I also support the compliance of it and I think it has to be policed and as Ann pointed out or someone at the other end of our County pointed out that it has to be kept squeaky clean and totally totally above board. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next candidate, Kevin Fletcher.

Kevin Fletcher (I-Scottsville): Yes, I support the land use tax. I think it's probably about the only way that anyone can really afford to own any land in Albemarle County and farm, and it is abused. I mean there is not a wonderment. It is abused. I witness it every day; when I drive around the County, you see it. So I would think that this is something that costs the County millions of dollars in tax dollars and I think that when you're looking for getting a bang out of the spending money and I think that certainly the County could afford to pay someone who investigates this. I think that also if you're going to be getting a tax break that you should have to fill out I guess maybe a yearly report as to what do you do on your farm. I mean, if you cut hay, on what days did you cut hay, how many round bales or square bales did you do and what did you do with them? Did you sell them? Did you use them for your personal use? I mean, this is something that you probably do already or you have an idea of and this is just a simple form that you turn in every year that helps you to comply to go along with this and it creates a paper trail so if there is someone who is believed to be taking advantage of this and basically is putting your tax break at risk, is what they're doing, and so also it also comes back to you. If you see it happening and it's blatantly going on, it gives you an avenue of which you can say, you know, I drive by and see this person, they go by with a hay bind a couple of times of a year. They just let it lie. They never rake it. They never get it up and they're getting a tax break and because eventually it's going to cost you your tax break and that is—

It comes down to compliance for you to also be policing and I think we need to hire someone to be responsible for checking out any indiscretions and like I say, I think that there needs to be just a simple form that you fill out and tells what you do on your farm every year. That's it. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next candidate, Lindsay Dorrier.

Lindsay Dorrier (D-Scottsville): Well, I think that— I'm in favor of land use taxation and I've seen it from the other end, too. I'm a lawyer and I handle real estate closings and I see when land is subdivided and sold, there's a rollback tax. If it's in land use taxation, it's rolled back I believe for about five years and the person has to— The former owner pays that rollback tax so that is something that ensures compliance and gives the County back some money. It also allows the landowner the tax advantage of land use taxation.

I don't really think that— I think this may be being abused but I'm not— I don't really see— Well, I guess I don't believe that there're millions of dollars being lost because we enacted land use to preserve farm land and to preserve open space. If that's our goal, it hasn't worked that well but, I mean, it's working somewhat well I guess for the farmers, at least the ones in this room because I talked with Joe Jones on this and we were talking about whether you could farm without land use and I don't believe you can farm without land use. I think it's too difficult and too expensive and you need that land use in order to be able to farm, so I think that while we can tighten up on it, we can make some changes in it, that we can— We should support it and work with the farmers to try to make it the best program we can make it and realize that the landowners who sell and subdivide the land are going to pay the tax at closing, a roll-back tax, so that would protect the public. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Finishing up on the third question will be the Rivanna District and I'll read the question. **What is your position on land use taxation rates? What should be done to ensure compliance with the requirements for designation of land use property?** Going first, Marcia Joseph.

Marcia Joseph (D-Rivanna): Well, I have an opportunity now to thank you for inviting me here. I really do appreciate it. I appreciate the fact that so many people are being here even when it was advertised at one point a bluegrass band was coming. I think it's really important that we get out here and we get our concepts before you and, again, agriculture is near and dear to me so I really do appreciate being here.

The land use assessment program is extremely important to keep farming going in Albemarle County. It's just essential. We've been talking about whether it's been abused or not and there's any number of things that can be done to make sure that people who are in land use are using it as a farm by some sort of simple statement every month, some sort of affidavit— Or not every month, every year, annually, an affidavit or you could be in a ag forest district or you could be under conservation easement and certainly that makes sense, but it's something also that really needs to be discussed by the public. It's something that I've seen in public meetings lately that really hurts my heart is that you see

people from the urban area getting up and talking about the fact that people get land use in the rural areas and with the assumption that they're not paying their fair share of the taxes which is definitely not true.

I think that people in the urban areas are beginning to realize that what makes this County beautiful are the great big open spaces that are our family farms now and I think it's extremely important that we continue a land use program and I don't know that there's abuse going on. I really don't know that, but I do think that there are ways that we can make people feel more comfortable about the fact that we are giving land use to people and, again, I wouldn't give it up. I don't think we'd survive. I think that'd you see so many subdivisions going up you couldn't count fast enough, so thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you. Next candidate, Ken Boyd.

Ken Boyd (R-Rivanna): I think that I'm going to violate the politician's creed and be brief. I definitely support the land use policy that we have here. I'm unaware that there's widespread abuse of that. I think we as the County Supervisors rely a lot on our assessor staff and we know that it's going to be challenging for them now that we're now moving to a one-year assessment rather than every-other-year assessment but I certainly am going to look in to find out if there is any widespread abuse and I think we should take measures to correct that. Thank you.

Mark Campbell: Thank you, candidates, for taking your time to answer a few questions from Albemarle County Farm Bureau.