



Beloved Clarke County Fairgrounds Now Permanently Protected by Easement Potential 540 Housing Units Avoided



The Clarke County Ruritan Club, led by President Brad Broy, worked diligently to put the easement in place

It's safe to say most Clarke County residents have spent time at the Clarke County Fairgrounds – whether enjoying the annual county fair with their families, competing or spectating at livestock and equine shows, celebrating holiday fireworks, marveling at antique steam engines, or shopping markets for vintage ware.

Now, fairgoers will be able to share their memorable experiences with new generations. In fact, *many* new generations.

As of October 10, the more than 47 acres of fairgrounds, owned by the Clarke County Ruritan Club, were officially protected forever by an open-space easement. The Purcellville-based Old Dominion Land Conservancy is the official easement holder.

Brad Broy, the Ruritan Club's president

for the last four years, explains the club has owned the fairgrounds since 1951.

According to Broy, the decision to place the property in easement actually began in 2020 as part of the Ruritan Club's transition from a 501(c)4 to a 501(c)3 organization. Working with an attorney, the group was reviewing a checklist of items important to their new organizational structure, and that checklist included guarding the property's value.

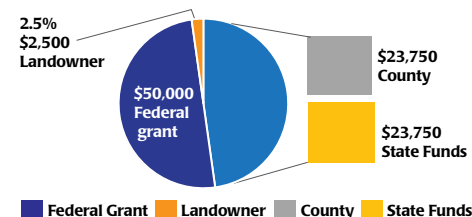
"We were worried," said Broy. "We wanted to make sure this land is protected forever. And we want the property to always be the fairgrounds. In this county, it's really all we have for so many types of events. We host everything here – the county fair, fireworks, horse shows, holiday events, markets ... people can walk their dogs, do yoga, whatever. We don't lock the gates."

(continued on back)

Another Incentive to Consider an Easement

The Easement Authority has approved an added incentive for landowners utilizing grants for conservation easement purchases. Previously, landowners were asked to donate 25% of the appraised value of any easement purchased by the Authority using grant funds. Now, an income scale has been adopted to allow for a reduction of the 25% for lower- and middle-income landowners.

New sliding-scale policy; \$100,000 appraisal value scenario



For example, previously if the appraised value of the easement was \$100,000, the owner donation was 25%, or \$25,000. Now, if the owner's three-year adjusted gross income (AGI) is, say, \$60,000, then based on the newly adopted policy, the owner donation would be reduced to 10% of \$25,000, or \$2,500.

For more information, please contact Clarke County's Conservation Planner, Lorien Lemmon, at llemon@clarkecounty.gov or 540-955-5134.

Thankful for Our Open Spaces



Ahhh, what a view.... When you cross into Clarke County from Loudoun County on Route 7 – maybe after a day of working in “the city” – your shoulders relax, you take a deep breath, your sight line stretches for miles, taking in the beautiful countryside. You're home.

This spectacular view? It's from historic Bear's Den, a 66-acre property that straddles Clarke and Loudoun Counties and is owned by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Connecting the counties – and the two very different building densities – is Route 7 on the right in the photo.

But our wonderfully sprawling open space is the focus. With 25% of Clarke County's acreage protected forever by conservation easements, the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority works with you to preserve this scene for today and for future generations.

Photo courtesy of Berryville-Clarke County

Quarterly newsletter published by the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority dedicated to preserving properties with natural, cultural or scenic resources worthy of protection

Fairgrounds (continued)

The easement process started formally in August 2023, and the Ruritans immediately agreed they would retire all the dwelling unit rights (DURs) on the property.

D. Brook Middleton, CPA of The Virginia Easement Exchange, guided the club through the research and decision-making. Middleton pointed out in a report to the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority that the zoning for this property prior to the easement could have allowed for a maximum potential density of 540 housing units.

540 housing units?

Yes, that was a possibility. Broy shakes his head.

As part of the easement transaction, the Ruritan Club will earn tax credits. Broy explains the Ruritans are prudent with their finances and always thinking of the future.

"We're hoping to put any dollars we save from the credits into property upgrades and a long-term endowment, so the fairgrounds will be secure forever," he stresses. "The only thing we're trying to do is protect the land for all of us."

On March 19, 2024, the Clarke County Board of Supervisors approved and ordered into the official records a Resolution of Support for the Conservation and Protection of the Fairgrounds. The resolution cited the "conservation and preservation of the Fairgrounds will yield significant benefits to the citizens of Clarke County by (1) preserving the unique character of the Fairgrounds as a recreational, educational, and cultural resource for County residents, (2) preventing loss of the Fairgrounds to residential development, (3) promoting Clarke County agricultural education and appreciation, (4) advocating the benefits of conservation easements, and (5) promoting Clarke County tourism and commerce."

"Oh, what a wonderful evening!" Annual Thank-You Reception Blends Fun and Facts

The weather was perfect, the barbecue was delicious, the scotch-tasting was a hit, and the camaraderie was at its peak.

More than 100 land conservationists came early and stayed late for the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority's annual reception in mid-October, celebrating another successful year of protecting open spaces and thanking the many easement enthusiasts.

"We gather as a wonderful mix of donors, easement landowners, county officials, and other friends – all with the same mission: to preserve and protect Clarke County's natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources," said George Ohrstrom II, the vice chair of the Easement Authority and host of the annual event. "That means safeguarding family farms, rivers and streams, soil, groundwater, cultural sites, scenic byways, and – *at the heart of all this* – our rural character. So 'Thank You' for your loyal support."

Ohrstrom reported to the group that currently Clarke County has 28,832 acres in conservation easement and 326 dwelling unit rights (DURs) have been retired. More than 25% of the county's acres are protected forever by easement!

"Please continue to be ambassadors for land conservation in Clarke County," Ohrstrom added. "Tell your neighbors, your relatives, your friends how vital our open spaces are to the character of our community."



Please join these individuals in helping preserve open space in Clarke County. Complete & mail this form together with your check or credit card instructions in an envelope to the address below.

YES! I want to help preserve open space in Clarke County.

☐ Please accept the enclosed donation in the amount checked below made payable to Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority.

☐ Instead, please charge my credit card for the amount checked below. ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Account Number _____ Exp. Date _____ / _____ Security Code _____

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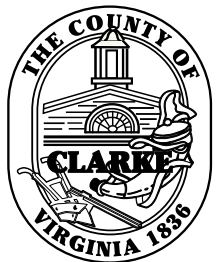
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Make check payable to: Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority & mail to the address at left.

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