

The Recorder

IN THE COMMUNITY, ABOUT THE COMMUNITY, SINCE 1877.

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Foundation urged again to turn down Dominion

Editor's note: The following letter was written to Bobbie Cabibbo of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation on Jan. 9, regarding Dominion's request for converting easements, and shared with The Recorder. It was also copied to: Attorney General Mark Herring, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Gov. Terry McAuliffe, Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Sen. Creigh Deeds, Del. Ben Cline, and the Bath County Planning Commission. Dear Ms. Cabibbo:

I am again writing to ask the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Board of Trustees to deny Dominion's request to convert easement properties under the 1704 process. As an easement holder in Bath County, I believe a decision in favor of Dominion would forever undermine VOF's ability to carry out its core mission.

As a citizen concerned with land use and development, as well as our natural resources, I have worked with Bath County officials to craft comprehensive plans since 1995. It is clear to me, as well as the Bath County Planning Commission, that the ACP is in direct conflict with our current plan. The unambiguous language of statute 1704, stating that any conversion must be in compliance with local comprehensive plans, gives VOF the right and obligation to vote "no."

This is obviously a complicated issue, with forces of both state and federal governments at play. I think, however, that the decision for most current and future easement holders boils down to an issue of trust. VOF asks landowners to put specific restrictions on their properties regarding development in exchange for an easement document that will supposedly carry into the future, protecting the properties in accordance with goals agreed to by both VOF and landowners. The promises of protection into the future will be totally meaningless if corporations with deep pockets are allowed to extinguish easement rights through a perversion of the 1704 process.

None of us knows the future in regard to the ACP, but a vote for conversion will certainly cripple the VOF in its efforts to protect land in Virginia. Our farm, comprising more than 500 acres, has been in my family since 1792. We put 200 of these acres under easement with the implicit promise that VOF would stand with us, helping protect our farm, whatever the future might bring. How could we or anyone else consider putting more land under easement with an organization not willing to at least try to live up to its obligations?

Jeannette B. Robinson
Warm Springs, Va.