

APPROVED MINUTES
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
Wednesday, September 8, 2010
Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Meeting called to order at 11:40 a.m. by Gabe Hudson
Members Present: Tom Antor, Dennis Heffron, Gabe Hudson, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Suzie Reinbold
Members Absent: Carl Blough, Jerry Davis
Guests: Commissioner Bill Hirsch
Staff Present: Kendra Wills and Jennifer DeHaan

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Hirsch commended Commissioner Antor for his leadership on the PDR Funding Sustainability Subcommittee.

ADOPTION OF August 11, 2010 MINUTES

Antor moved and Heffron seconded the minutes should be adopted with a few minor corrections. Unanimous.

USDA GRANT FUNDING

Wills reported that the USDA awarded funding for three farms that were submitted on July 1, 2010 (The two Bradford farms and the Wollander farm). However, Kent County will not be able to sign the agreement with the USDA until the county budget is approved in November because these farms use 2011 county funding as well as Frey grant funding, which has not been secured.

The USDA noted that the Kruithoff farm and the Heffron farm may be added at a later date.

DONATION OF AG CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Wills reminded the Ag Board of the conversation the Board had approximately a year ago concerning the idea of financially supporting property owners that would like to donate an agricultural conservation easement to either the Land Conservancy of West Michigan or the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA). This may be an option for one of the 2010 Kent County PDR Program applicants as his income is too high to qualify for USDA FRPP grant support for PDR on his property.

After some discussion the Board asked Wills to talk with MDA about this concept before contact is made with the Board of Commissioners about the idea. The Board did agree that all payments from the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board would be on a reimbursement basis after the easement was recorded. Financial support from the Ag Board may include reimbursement for appraisal costs and closing costs (if any).

DISCUSSION ON HOLDING DONATED AG EASEMENTS

Wills reported that she received contact from a property owner in Vergennes Township that may be interested in donating a conservation easement to the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board. The property owner contacted the Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) and they were not interested in holding the easement because the property was too small (15 acres). The property is currently a wooded area with frontage along Honey Creek. The property is not being farmed and the property owner does not intend to farm it.

After a few minutes of discussion the Ag Preservation Board determined that they were not interested in considering holding an easement on this property because it did not meet PDR criteria. Board members felt that other organizations (Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Vergennes Township, State of Michigan) were other

options for the property owner and this would not be an appropriate activity for the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board to take on. Wills agreed to contact the property owner with the Board's decision.

MEETING WITH MEIJER FOUNDATION

A meeting with Mr. Rob VerHeulen with the Meijer Foundation has been set for September 16 at 11:00AM at Meijer Headquarters in Walker. Carl Blough, Tom Antor, Denny Heffron, Kendra Wills and Commissioner Sandi Frost Parrish will attend the meeting. Permission to submit a proposal for a three-year, \$300,000 grant (same as Frey and GRCF) will be requested.

FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL BOOTH NOV. 18-20 AT DEVOS PLACE

Hudson, Hirsch and Eric Fouch volunteers to set-up and tear down the booth. Reinbold and Heffron agreed to staff the booth. Ag Board members will be asked to sign up for at least a three hour shift on or before the October meeting. Wills agreed to prepare a new post card to distribute at the booth promoting donations to the Farmland Preservation Endowment Fund at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Perhaps we could offer a drawing for a prize of some kind and collect business cards/contact information. We will also show the power point that the Board developed earlier this spring and used at the John Ball Zoo and Public Museum booth events.

TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETINGS

Ag Board members said they would like to attend township board meetings to provide a brief update (Wills to draft talking points) on farmland preservation. Some Ag Board members already volunteered:

Tom Antor: Algoma, Alpine, Sparta

Denny Heffron: Gaines, Grattan, Cannon, Oakfield, Byron

Gabe Hudson: Gaines, Caledonia, Bowne, Byron

Commissioner Hirsch: Gaines, Caledonia, Bowne, Byron

HOMEWORK

Ag Board members agreed to review the 2010 PDR Scoring Criteria and bring their ideas for how to improve it for next year to the October meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 13, 2010 at 11:30 AM to be held at Kent/MSU Extension.

Written by: Kendra Wills.