

APPROVED MINUTES

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Meeting called to order at 11:40 a.m. by Gabe Hudson

Members Present: Tom Antor, Denny Heffron, Gabe Hudson, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Suzie Reinbold

Members Absent: Carl Blough, Jerry Davis

Staff Present: Jay Hoekstra, Kendra Wills and Jennifer DeHaan

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Hudson at 11:36 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADOPTION OF OCTOBER 13, 2010 MINUTES

Reinbold moved and Heffron seconded the minutes be adopted. Unanimous.

PDR INFORMATIONAL PIECE

Wills reported that she prepared a three-page informational flyer on the farmland preservation program to present to the Board of Commissioners when Betty Blase presented the 2010 performance measures for the PDR Program. The Preservation Board commented that they liked the brochure and it should be available at the Wine and Food Festival booth as well as when Ag Board members present to Township Boards. It was noted that the size of the map legend should be increased.

PHASE 2 REPORTS

Wills reported that "recognized environmental concerns" had been identified on two of the five farms the Preservation Board is working on preserving. A neighbor of the Wilcox farm left three 55 gallon barrels of diesel fuel in the tree line touching the Wilcox farm along the southern border. These barrels were removed by the neighbor but soil contamination of the Wilcox farm but be ruled out by a Phase 2 report according to the USDA. Superior Environmental gave a cost estimate of \$2,000 for this work.

The Cole farm in Courtland Township has two recognized environmental concerns (REC). First, an old railroad bed in the tree line along the southern border of the farm. The railroad was removed in 1946 (according to the property owner) but the weed killer chemicals along with the oils and heavy metals make all railroad bed an "REC". Also, a high level of nitrates near the surface has been identified. The property owner had a new well drilled approximately 10 years ago that is now 100 feet deep and the nitrate level is within acceptable range, but this is also an REC. A Phase 2 report must be completed for the property to be preserved, according to USDA. Superior Environmental gave a cost estimate of \$2,300 for this work.

Reimbold moved and Heffron seconded that Superior Environmental be contracted to complete Phase 2 reports on the Wilcox and Cole farms with payment coming from the Kent County Ag Preservation Fund (Grand Rapids Community Foundation grant funds).

After some discussion on the process involved with Phase 2 reports, Jay Hoekstra offered to have an expert on Phase 2 reports attend a future Preservation Board meeting to provide education to members on this topic. Board members liked this idea. (It was noted that there is no such thing as a Phase 3 and Phase 2 reports must be recorded on the title of the property.)

PDR FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY SUBCOMMITTEE

Commissioner Antor reported that the SubC conducted a survey of township supervisors on their feelings about PDR and funding issues. Most supervisors from participating township supported the PDR program but due to limited budgets, most were not willing to make financial contributions to PDR at this time. A few supervisors were willing and a few had creative ideas about funding sources. It was noted that six participating townships never responded to the survey. The supervisors from Grand Rapids Township and Plainfield Township were not supportive of the PDR Program or of county funding for the program. Preservation Board members noted that perhaps if there is another trip to Lancaster County, PA township supervisors can be invited to attend.

The polling firm EPIC-MRA was contracted to conduct a phone poll of 400 Kent County voters to determine their knowledge and support for farmland preservation. The results of this phone poll will be presented at the December 9 Board of Commissioners meeting.

A final report of the PDR Funding Sustainability Subcommittee is being drafted and will likely be presented to the BOC in January 2011. Approximately \$56 million is the cost of purchasing development rights to meet the goal of 25,000 acres of prime and unique farmland preserved in Kent County.

2011 SCORING CRITERIA

The Preservation Board continued to work on the 2011 scoring criteria. After some discussion it was agreed to add a new category to award a maximum of 10 points for township contributions, while keeping a maximum of 13 points for all other contributions (landowner contributions included). This will hopefully lead to greater contributions from townships to support the preservation of farms in their community. The scoring criteria will be finalized at the December 2010 meeting.

PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The volunteer schedule for the Wine and Food Festival Booth was reviewed as well as the schedule for Township Board meetings. Preservation Board members are asked to call their townships directly to get on the meeting agenda when it fits in their schedule over the next four or five months.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8, 2010 at 11:30 AM to be held at Kent/MSU Extension.
Written by: Kendra Wills.