

Approved Minutes

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Meeting Called to order at 11:38 by Gabe Hudson

Members Present: Tom Antor, Carl Blough, Jerry Davis, Gabe Hudson, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Suzie Reinbold, Dennis Heffron

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Kendra Wills, Jay Hoekstra, and Chris Jacobs, Kent/MSU Intern

Guests: Commissioner Jim Talen, Bert Vescolani, Zoo Director

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of January 12, 2011 Minutes

A correction was made to last month's minutes noting Mr. Heffron was elected to the Vice Chairperson position. Minutes were unanimously adopted with this correction.

Farm Exhibit at John Ball Zoo

John Ball Zoo Director Bert Vescolani is visiting today because the Zoo is updating the petting barn area of the zoo and Vescolani is interested in telling the story of local hobby farmers through signage. Vescolani is also looking for a tractor (doesn't need to be in working order) for youth to sit on for a photo opportunity. Donors of the tractor would be recognized through signage. Blough said he may have a tractor that could be donated and would contact Vescolani. Ag Board members agreed to review written information/draft signage language for fact checking purposes.

Presentation by Commissioner Talen on PDR Sustainability Subcommittee Report

Commissioner Talen presented the power point he put together for the Board of Commissioners reviewing the PDR Sustainability Subcommittee report for the Ag Board. Talen reported that the report may or may not be "received and filed by the BOC" as the Standing Rules Committee may need to define what "receiving and filing" means.

Heffron noted that the long-term costs savings to the county from PDR was not included in the report. For example, the Sherriff's Department would not need as many staff or operating costs to patrol preserved farms as they would residential development. Similarly, the demand for jail space would likely be reduced. Perhaps Lancaster County, PA has some of this data.

Heffron also noted that he heard the U.S. will need 10 million more acres of corn produced in 2011 to meet demand.

Review Public Education Activities

It was determined that although people generally agreed the "Earth and Sky Days" at the GR Public Museum booth was not well attended, we may try again this year because it is only one day for 4 or 5 hours. The John Ball Zoo booth was very well attended and we will do this again this year. Volunteers

will be asked to sign up for booth staffing times at the March meeting. Mr. Vescolani reported that over 4,000 people visited the zoo for the “Party for the Planet” day last year.

Wilcox Closing On January 31, 2011.

Wills reported the closing went smoothly and the total acres preserved by the Kent County PDR Program is now 1,547 acres.

USDA Grant Proposal Due Feb 16, 2011.

All three property owners accepted their options (Bradford LLC, Wollander, Kruithoff). We hope to hear back in April from USDA on funding.

Township Board Meeting Talking Points

Wills distributed a final draft of the talking points for township board meetings. Wills asks that each person contact the township and schedule your own presentation when it works with your schedule. It would be best if these were done before April 30 when the PDR application cycle ends.

Other

The Ag Board discussed some possibilities for a spring 2011 event to celebrate the latest round of preserved farms. Perhaps one event in Sparta and one event in Vergennes Township would be best. The Ag Board wanted the events on preserved farms and perhaps a tent rental will be required. Agri-businesses and foundations should be invited as well as local and state officials. Officials invitations and RSVP cards should be required. Perhaps June 20 – June 30 is the best time.

The Board of Commissioners will consider the 2011 Scoring Criteria in February. Postcards to property owners announcing application cycle to go out after approval by BOC.

Video showing the history of Blough Farms in Lowell Township did not work properly so may be shown next meeting.

Wills reported that she may be meeting with Amway officials about hosting a presentation on agriculture for leaders visiting from China.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:19 pm.

Next Meeting is March 9, 2011 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSUE.

Written by Chris Jacobs and Kendra Wills.

Reviewed by Jerry Davis.