

Approved Minutes

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Meeting Called to order at 11:42 by Gabe Hudson

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

Members Absent: Dennis Heffron

Staff Present: Dan Ophoff, Kent County Corporate Counsel and Kendra Wills

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of February 9, 2011 Minutes

Motion by Reinbold with support from Janowiak to support the minutes with no corrections. Unanimous.

Conflict of Interest Training

Mr. Ophoff reviewed the Citizens' Board Training Handbook that all Preservation Board members should have received when they were first appointed. (If Board members cannot locate their handbook, please let Kendra know and she will get you another copy.) There is a copy in the book covering the Code of Ethics for Kent County. The County will now be asking all citizens appointed to County Boards to sign this code of ethics each year. In addition, Legal Counsel drafted a Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form for Preservation Board Members to declare potential conflicts of interests with relationships to PDR applicants. This form will be completed by each Preservation Board member at the May 2011 meeting after all the 2011 PDR applications have been accepted.

Review of Township Board Meetings

Hudson reported that he visited Gaines and Caledonia Board meetings and was scheduled in Byron Township on Monday and Bowne Township on March 21. Birgit Klohs of The Right Place, Inc. was presenting at the Gaines Township Board meeting and commented that she felt farmland preservation was very important for our community's economy. In addition, Bryan Harrison, Supervisor of Caledonia Township was very supportive of the PDR Program and will work to update their master plan to meet state PDR grant criteria. They also agreed to add a line item in their budget to support PDR.

Antor reported that he visited Algoma Township last night and the program was well received. He will visit Sparta Township this evening.

Davis reported that he has not been able to present at the Courtland Township Board meeting yet due to full agendas. He noted Supervisor Porter believes the program doesn't have funding. Commissioner Antor volunteered to speak with him.

Reinbold is scheduled at Vergennes Township on March 21.

Blough is visiting Cascade Township tonight and will present in Lowell Township next month. He has not received a call back from Ada yet to schedule a time to present.

Janowiak presented at the Cannon Township Board meeting and they agreed to add a line item in their budget for PDR. Also a Board member is interested in seeing if he can help secure funds from a community foundation in Rockford to support PDR applicants from Cannon Township. Janowiak will continue to follow-up on this.

Wills reminder Preservation Board members PDR applications and the 2011 scoring criteria is posted online at www.accesskent.com/pdr Also, a mailing of 10 PDR applications and 5 copies of the scoring criteria when out to participating township offices yesterday.

Public Education Activities

Wills distributed a rough mock-up of a grocery list with facts about Kent County and Michigan agriculture to distribute at farmers markets this summer. After some discussion the Board determined that a few hundred should be printed for distribution at one or two markets to test the effectiveness to this activity. When asked to sign up to distribute five Board members said they would be willing to volunteer to distribute the grocery lists at farmers markets this summer.

Preservation Board members also signed up to staff booths at the April 16 Party for the Planet event at John Ball Zoo and the April 30 Earth and Sky Day at the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

Other

Janowiak shared information about the Heart of the Lakes conference on land conservation that she attended on behalf of the Preservation Board in Lansing. She noted that the conference stressed the importance of collaboration with other conservation organizations. She suggested that we need to do a better job of providing our Congressmen and Senators with stories and photos about our farmland preservation successes and we should make sure to invite them to speak at the celebrations we are planning this spring.

Antor reminded Wills that we need to connect with Russ Morgan on the applicability of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Funds to preserved farmland that is also hunting land.

Reinbold stated that WYCE airs community service videos for local non-profits and perhaps we should develop something.

Janowiak volunteered to try and find an amateur photographer that can take pictures of our preserved farms.

Video showing the history of Blough Farms in Lowell Township was shown. Thanks Carl for sharing!

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Next Meeting is April 13, 2011 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSUE.

Written by Kendra Wills.