

Approved Minutes
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
Wednesday, August 10, 2011
Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Members Present: Carl Blough, Jerry Davis, Gabe Hudson, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Dennis Heffron, Suzie Reinbold
Members Absent: Tom Antor
Staff Present: Jay Hoekstra and Kendra Wills

Meeting called to order at 1:10 AM by Hudson. (Note: Meeting time was changed to 1:00 due to meeting conflict at Kent MSUE.)

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of June 8, 2011 Minutes

Motion by Janowiak with support from Blough to approve the June 2011 minutes. Unanimous.

Review Anticipated Budget for 2011 and 2012

Wills distributed a handout on the anticipated spending for 2011. In addition to preserving four farms totaling 436 acres in 2011 (anticipating November 2011 closings), the Ag Preservation Fund also paid for the printing and installation of 6 new "Preserved Farmland" signs. The signs will be installed by the Kent County Road Commission. Wills estimates the total costs for printing and installation of signs to be \$5,000 (this is probably high). Given these spending amounts, there are enough funds to order approximately 15 to 20 appraisals for the 2012 federal grant cycle. (Selection of farms for appraisal is discuss under the following agenda item.)

Wills also explained that she received confirmation from Mary Swanson, Assistant Kent County Administrator, that county funds in the Agricultural Preservation Fund can be carried forward to the next fiscal year. So, the Preservation Board does not have to worry about spending all the funds by December 31, 2011.

Heffron noted that the Preservation Board should request a grant extension from the Frey and Grand Rapids Community Foundations due to the current economic conditions. Perhaps their entire grant awards can be extended over 4 years instead of only 3 years. Other Board members agreed and Wills stated she would ask Mary Swanson if this would be possible.

For 2012, MSU Extension requested a \$275,000 Kent County general fund allocation to support farmland preservation (same allocation as 2010 and 2011). We will not know until the budget is adopted in mid-November if this will be awarded. County funding is very tight. If this awarded, Wills reported that she believes the Preservation Board could preserve five farms or around 500 acres in 2012 – but this also depends upon federal grant funds as well.

Review 2011 PDR Scoring Results and Selection of Appraisals

Wills distributed a copy of the scoring results. Francis Cox from Cascade Township decided to withdraw her application. That left zero applications from the southern region. This sparked a brief conversation that the Preservation Board needs to set up a meeting with our Biosolid Program partners to update them on the status of the program.

Based on the budget information and the fact that likely only five farms will be able to be preserved in 2012 (due to funding constraints) the Preservation Board decided to order a total of 10 appraisals. (Appraisals are only valid for 12 months, but they can be updated for a slightly reduced cost.) This way we will have enough farms to work with in case some don't agree to the appraised value.

After much discussion, Reinbold moved to appraise the following farms based on the Sub-Region scoring results as well as the number of applications from each region. Support from Davis. Heffron abstained due to potential conflict of interest with his mother being an applicant and the Lovins farm, which he rents for farming purposes. Blough, Janowiak, Davis, Reinbold, Hudson voting Aye. No one was opposed.

Fruit Ridge Sub-Region: #1 Bradford Farm, #2 Bradford Farm, VanOeffelen 38 acre Farm, Younquist Farm, Goodfellow Farm. (5 farms were selected from the Fruit Ridge because this was the top scoring region.)

Parnell Corridor Sub-Region: Hefferan Farm (no significant relationship to Dennis Heffron), Lovins, Poulis. (3 farms were selected from Parnell because this was the second highest scoring region.)

North Sub-Region: Noreen and Patterson Farms. (2 farms were selected from this region because it was the lowest scoring region overall.)

It was discussed that appraisals should be completed in November so the Board of Commissioners could approve option agreements at their early December 2011 meeting (after the 2012 budget has been approved). This will help us prepare for an expected February 2012 USDA grant deadline.

Wills will submit this information to the Purchase Department so a bid request can be offered. Wills is hopefully one or more firms will be selected to complete the work at the September 14 Preservation Board meeting.

Other

Wills will be distributing grocery lists at the St. Mary's Hospital Farmers Market on Wealthy Street on August 25.

Davis volunteered to help Wills with the baseline report photos of the Wollander farm. Reinbold, Hudson and Janowiak agreed to help Wills with the baseline report photos of the Kruithoff farm.

Wills requested Preservation Board members assist in helping place stakes where "Preserved Farmland" signs should be placed on the six farms that were preserved in 2010. Heffron, Davis and Janowiak agreed to help.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned 2:55 PM.

Next Meeting is September 14, 2011 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension

Written by Kendra Wills