

Approved Minutes
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
Wednesday, November 9, 2011
Location: Kent/MSU Extension

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

Meeting called to order at 11:40 AM by Hudson.

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of September 14, 2011 Minutes

Motion by Janowiak with support from Antor to approve the minutes. Unanimous.

Plan to Present Appraisal Results With Property Owners

Wills reported that the 10 appraisal reports are due from the appraisal firms on November 15. Wills asked the Administrator's Office what the time line would be for getting option agreements approved before a early February USDA Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program grant deadline, while allowing for sufficient time for landowners to sign an option agreement. Some options were discussed and it was decided it would be best to have an Ag Preservation Board meeting on November 30 to determine which Option Agreements to recommend to the BOC for approval for the December 20 Finance Committee meeting and the January 3 Board of Commissioners meeting. This will be based on how much funding the PDR Program has for 2012 and interest from property owners. This timeline would allow time for property owners to consider the option as well as development of a grant proposal to USDA.

Wills asked Preservation Board members if they would like to participate in meetings with property owners to review appraisal results. Janowiak, Reinbold and Blough volunteered. Wills hopes to meet with all nine property owners before the November 30 Preservation Board meeting.

Some discussion also occurred around the option of installment payments and lump sum payments. The Preservation Board stated that only the lump sum option should be offered in 2012 due to the difficulty in requesting additional payments from USDA.

Monitoring Reports

Wills thanked Hudson, Reinbold and Blough for volunteering to help her with monitoring reports again this year. Reports are due to USDA on December 16 and they do want reports for farms preserved in December 2010 submitted by this date. Wills also has to complete the 5 year monitoring report photographs of the Flanagan farm.

Update on the Wege Foundation Proposal

A proposal to the Wege Foundation requesting \$140,000 to support the preservation of the Hefferan farm (no relation to Dennis Heffron) was approved. Wills reported that she included a \$10,000 contribution from the property owner in this proposal to make the numbers work. This is a contribution on top of the approximately \$5,000 contribution to the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Endowment Fund at the time of closing. Wills will present this information to the family when she meets with them to review the appraisal results.

The Preservation Board reviewed an aerial photo of this property and expressed concern about the sister's 20 acres of land along Parnell Avenue. Wills was asked to get contact information for the sister from the Hefferan family and call her to notify her of the possibility her brother's farm may be preserved and talk with her about her interest in her portion of the farm.

2011 Closings

Things seem to be going smoothly for the closings on the Bradford LLC and Kruithoff farms. The Wollanders have elected to close on December 21 as they believe they have tax advantages for doing so. The Bradford Trust was delayed because the survey was completed in October after the corn was removed from the property.

Other

The sign-up sheet to staff the table at the Wine, Beer and Food Festival was distributed again. Many thanks to all the volunteers. This is a good public education project for the Preservation Board.

Wills ordered "Preserved Farmland" road signs and the Kent County Road Commission will be installing on the 2010 preserved farms. The Ag Preservation Fund held by Kent County will have to cover the cost of materials and labor to install these signs.

Mr. Hudson reported that he is very concerned about the new rules that are being considered at the federal level concerning youth farm workers. Wills distributed a handout developed by MSUE for 4-H parents and club leaders. Blough stated that his daughter would have to sell her beef cows as she would no longer be able to feed them if these rules were adopted due to the fact that their farm is a partnership and not a sole proprietorship.

Wills reminded the group that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is looking for letters of support for the USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. Wills agreed to draft a letter for Hudson's signature stating facts about the Kent County PDR program and how federal funds have been used.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned 1:00 PM.
Written by Kendra Wills