

Approved Minutes
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
Wednesday, February 1, 2012
Location: Kent/MSU Extension

Members Present: Tom Antor, Carl Blough, Gabe Hudson, Dennis Heffron, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Suzie Reinbold
Members Absent: Bryan Harrison
Guests: Mary Swanson and Jen DeHaan from Kent County Administrator's Office
Staff Present: Kendra Wills

Meeting called to order at 11:35 AM by Hudson.

Public Comment

None.

Review of Agenda for Possible Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Adoption of January 4, 2012 Minutes

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

Discussion on Staff Support for the PDR Program

Mary Swanson stated that Michigan State University Extension notified her last year that Kendra Wills would no longer be able to provide staff support for the Kent County PDR Program as of January 1, 2013. MSUE must cease all staff support for county programs and focus on MSUE initiatives. Wills' position will no longer be financially supported by Kent County to provide staff support for the PDR Program. These funds can be used to pay for someone else to provide staff support. Jen DeHaan is in the process of determining possible options for staff support and will present these options to the Ag Preservation Board as well as the Board of Commissioners. Swanson is hopeful future staff support will be determined by April 2012 so Wills can work with the new office in a transition period. Wills will be writing a manual of PDR Program operating procedures, which will be reviewed by the Ag Board.

Heffron noted that there is a need for stability as the PDR Program is constantly changing and a staff person needs time to learn the process. Swanson agreed with this; however, the staff support arrangement will be subject to an annual review (and budget decision) by the Board of Commissioners.

Set Date to Meet with Commissioner Parrish

Wills reported that Commissioner Parrish is not able to meet on Wednesdays. After some discussion, the Ag Board identified that they would like to schedule a meeting with Commissioner Parrish before the Board of Commissioners meeting on Thursday, March 8. DeHaan volunteered to help arrange this.

2012 Projects

Wills asked for assistance on several projects to be completed in 2012. After some discussion the following people volunteered to assist:

1. Denny Heffron will be working to meet with the Hefferan family to determine if they will re-apply for PDR in 2012.
2. Gabe Hudson will be the lead contact person to work with DeHaan on the staffing plan for the PDR Program starting in 2013.
3. Tom Antor volunteered to contact Foremost Dairy to determine if they would be interested in financially supporting the preservation of the VanOefflen farm. (Roger at 317-407-0581)

4. Kendra will be submitting a letter to Kent County Farm Bureau requesting \$10,000 to support PDR in 2012.
5. Denny Heffron will check and see if Poulias, VanOefflen and Youngquist are Farm Bureau members.
6. Sister Lucille volunteered to assist DeHaan with creating method of accepting donated development rights from Kent County farms to the Kent County PDR Program. Sr. Lucille will also contact Owen, the photographer from Aquinas, to see if we can distribute his photographs to local foundations to display on their web pages.
7. Tom Antor volunteered to contact Kruithoffs, Wollanders and Linda Bradford Anderson regarding road sign placement on their preserved farms.
8. Denny also volunteered to contact Meijer Foundation again regarding support for PDR.
9. We need to set up meetings with agricultural businesses to seek funds for PDR in Kent County. Places to meet with include: Gordon Food Service, Sparta Stores, Country Fresh, UDIM, Baremans Dairy, and Gerber.

2012 Scoring Criteria

After much discussion, a motion was made by Heffron with support from Janowiak to add the following sentence to the qualifying criteria for the 2012 Kent County PDR Program Scoring System:

“Due to limited funding, a maximum of one application per farm operation will be selected for appraisal during the 2012 application cycle.”

There is concern that people may feel the Kent County PDR program favors large farms or previous applicants over new applicants. The Preservation Board wants to create as fair of a process as possible. Per usual, this will be reviewed at the end of 2012 to determine if it was effective. Reinbold objected because of her concern that property owners who don't want to preserve their farm in one big block will submit several contiguous applications, but only one will be able to be appraised.

Vote: Yes: Antor, Blough, Heffron, Hudson, and Janowiak. No: Reinbold

Reinbold made a motion to approve the 2012 Kent County PDR Scoring Criteria with the noted change. Support from Blough. Unanimous.

Other

Wills reported that the Grand Rapids Community Foundation has not compiled financial reports for December 2011 contributions to the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Endowment Fund. We hope to have this report available in March. Wills will give Ag Board members access to view these financial reports online.

Blough reported that Lowell Township added a line item in the township's budget for PDR and if an application from the township is submitted they will contribute funds to support the application.

Heffron reported that Grattan Township added \$5,000 to the township's budget to support PDR in their township for 2012.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned 1:35 PM.
Written by Kendra Wills