

**Approved Minutes**  
**Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board**  
**Thursday, March 8, 2012**  
**Location: County Building**

Members Present: Tom Antor, Carl Blough, Bryan Harrison, Gabe Hudson, Dennis Heffron, Sr. Lucille Janowiak, Suzie Reinbold  
Members Absent: None  
Guests: Jen DeHaan, Commissioner Voorhees, Commissioner Hirsch  
Staff Present: Kendra Wills

**Meeting called to order at 8:02 AM by Hudson.**

**Public Comment**

None.

**Review of Agenda for Possible Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

**Adoption of February 1, 2012 Minutes**

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

**Public Education Projects for 2012**

Wills reported that the Wege Foundation is interested in hosting a public tour of the preserved Parnell Avenue Corridor this summer. The foundation will cover the cost of the bus as well as meeting room and food. After some discussion the Preservation Board decided they would like this event to be the big public celebration of the farms preserved in 2011 as well as a major public education event if the Wege Foundation agrees. A press release will be issued for this event to invite all types of media to attend.

A smaller cook-out will be arranged, possibly at the Kruithoff farm in Tyrone Township, one some other day this summer to invite the neighbors of the Kruithoffs, Bradfords, and Wollanders to learn more about PDR. This will be a smaller event with possibly only local media coverage.

Wills reported that an MSU Extension "Breakfast on the Farm" event will be held at Jim May's farm on Saturday, August 4, 2012. This may be an opportunity to interact with the public and educate about farmland preservation. Between 1,000 – 2,000 people are expected to attend this four hour event. Volunteers will be needed.

Bill Hirsch and Scott Everett have been working to organize another trip to Lancaster, PA. The trip will take place on May 23 – 25. Interested participants are asked to contact Commissioner Hirsch. He is hoping to secure funding from the Wege Foundation and a donation of a private plane so there is little to no cost for participants.

Janowiak reported that she has been attending films at Wealthy Theater sponsored by WMEAC and this would be a good venue to distribute information on PDR to the public. Wills agreed to ask Rachel Hood about the possibility of distributing information at these events.

Heffron reported that he plans to visit with several local agri-businesses and will be asking if we can use their company name as supporters of farmland preservation in Kent County.

**Connection with Land Conservancy**

Wills reported that Commissioner Ponstein is interested in creating another alternative for preserving farmland in Kent County similar to Lancaster County, PA's Lancaster Farmland Trust (<http://www.lancasterfarmlandtrust.org/>) Commissioner Ponstein will be contacting the new executive director of the Land Conservancy of West Michigan

to determine if they would be interested in adding farmland preservation to their list of focus areas and is they would be interested in traveling to Lancaster, PA to learn more.

Harrison said it would be nice if the Heart of the Lakes would host a conference with us on the role of land conservancies in Michigan on farmland preservation as the conservancies in Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Washtenaw Counties are very active. Wills agreed she would discuss this at the upcoming meeting in April at Heart of the Lakes' offices.

#### **Donation of Farmland Development Rights to Kent County**

DeHaan reported that she has been working on the process for farmers to donate development rights on farmland to the Kent County PDR Program (rather than us paying for the development rights). DeHaan reviewed the PDR Ordinance and it does allow for acceptance of donations. If property owners are wanting to take a tax credit for this donation they must pay the cost of an appraisal. DeHaan noted that the Ag Board may want to develop a modified easement for Kent County Legal approval to allow for splits (perhaps 40 acre minimum), which is less restrictive than the USDA easement. Township approval of the donation would need to be granted and Ag Board should seek this approval.

#### **Future Staff Support of the PDR Program**

DeHaan reviewed several general possibilities for future staff support for the Kent County PDR Program since MSU Extension has said Wills will no longer be able to staff the program. After some discussion, the Preservation Board decided the best option would be to offer an RFP that was open to all (including the Kent County Land Bank Program). DeHaan is hopeful the person/organization can be selected this fall to allow for several months of transition before the new staff takes over on January 1, 2013.

DeHaan noted that Commissioner Parrish has appointed another PDR Sustainability Workgroup consisting of Commissioners Rolls (chair), Talen, Hirsch, Antor, Parrish and Morgan.

#### **Set Date to Meet with Commissioner Parrish**

Wills reported that Commissioner Parrish was not able to make the meeting today. Two alternative dates were offered as possibilities. The Ag Board selected April 19 at 8:00 AM at the County Building. This will also service as our April monthly meeting. This will be confirmed with Commissioner Parrish's schedule.

#### **Other**

Several Preservation Board members noted how difficult it is to find the PDR page from the [www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com) home page. DeHaan agreed to talk with IT to seek if a link could be added.

Harrison requested Wills email general information about the PDR Program he could give to some landowners in Caledonia Township. Wills is always willing to meet with property owners to provide general information on PDR and can assist in completing the application form.

#### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned 9:35 AM.  
Written by Kendra Wills