

Approved Minutes
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
Wednesday, July 11, 2012
Location: Kent / MSU Extension

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

Members Absent: Bryan Harrison

Guest: None

Staff Present: Kendra Wills and Jennifer DeHaan and Virginia Vander Veen, Kent/MSU Extension Summer Intern

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

Public Comment

None.

Review of Agenda for Possible Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Adoption of June 6, 2012 Amended Minutes

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

Accept USDA Grant Funds for the Lovins Farm or Pursue Biosolids Project?

Wills stated that the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program is willing to grant \$42,120 to preserve the Lovins farm; however, Wills believes that due to the slow process of easement approval by the USDA, USDA funds could not be used in combination with Grand Valley Regional Biosolid Authority funds to preserve the Lovins farm. Wills stated that the USDA NRCS Lansing office is requesting acceptance or refusal of FRPP funds for the Lovins farm today. Wills also announced that the USDA stated they will be returning the grant money to USDA headquarters if it is not used for the Lovins farm.

Antor believes that the biosolids project is a “better sell”, as people would be more accepting of the expenditure of tax money being collected for sewer services as opposed to tax dollars directly going to purchase development rights.

Hudson, while mostly in agreement with Antor, stated that once you turn money back in to the federal government, often times you don’t get it back. Hudson also expressed concern that turning away federal dollars now might affect the future allocation of grant funds.

Blough inquired about the possibility of any new farms being interested in the biosolids program. Wills explained that only farms already in the biosolids program would be considered for the biosolids pilot project.

Heffron, while reluctant to give back federal funds, believes the biosolids project should move forward, as it could be a source of long term funding; Reinbold and Blough concur.

Antor makes a motion supported by Heffron to decline the USDA FRPP grant funds awarded for the Lovins farm and the continue to pursue a partnership with the Grand Valley Regional Biosolid Authority to preserve the Lovins farm. Unanimous.

Goodfellow Fundraiser Meeting Report

The topic of a location for the Goodfellow fundraiser was brought to the attention of the Board. Antor announced that Bill Goodfellow's farm would not be an option for the fundraiser. Wills suggested the Sparta Civic Center as well as the Amway Grand Plaza and a barn venue in Ravenna. In regards to the Ravenna barn, Blough believes that the fundraiser site should be located in Kent County. Hudson expressed concerns about the Amway Grand Plaza due to parking issues. Antor recommended Amore restaurant, as it is close to Sparta Township where the Goodfellow farm is located, has adequate parking, and is on a major road (M37/Alpine Avenue). A subcommittee of members to organize the fundraiser will meet at Amore Friday July 20th at noon to continue to plan the event.

Heffron expressed concern about using County funds for the fundraiser. He suggested just using them for matching funds and getting foundations to contribute to cover the remainder of the costs. Funds are need to hire a graphic designer for a post card to advertise the event, postage, printing, room rental and possibly food costs.

Wills inquired about Heffron's auctioneer and Heffron responded that there was no answer from the auctioneer at this time. The Board would like to hold the fundraiser on a Tuesday or Thursday evening between October 1 and 10. 5:30 p.m. appetizer s and 6:00 p.m. event start time.

Wills inquired about the recognition of bidders and offered up the idea of carving their names in a rock to display on the property. The Board did not come to a decision on how donors will be recognized.

July 26th Bus Tour

Wills reported that the Wege Foundation is requesting assistance from the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board in promoting their July 26th educational bus tour.

Gaines PDR Application

Hudson approached Gaines Township about documentation of future water and sewer service boundaries. The Township provided no such documentation, but stated that information regarding future sewer and water provisions was common knowledge. Janowiak inquired about a master plan for the township that could be consulted on this matter. Hudson pointed out that the entire board approved the PDR application. Wills suggested sending the Township Supervisor a letter requesting documentation that the entire Township is in fact planned for water and sewer. Antor recommended that the letter be sent certified mail and Heffron concurred. Janowiak proposed that a request by date be added to the letter. The Board agreed that July 31 would be an appropriate date as the next Ag Board meeting is August 1.

Heffron moves to continue to process / score the Gaines Township PDR application. Supported by Antor. Unanimous.

Kent County PDR Program Funding Update

Wills reported that she has been asked to prepare a memo on the status of funding for the Kent County PUR Program to assist with the 2013 county budget process. The following is an excerpt from this memo:

GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT: This grant was secured in February 2010 as a three year grant to award \$300,000 as a challenge grant to Kent County. This grant ends December 31, 2012. To date, \$195,835 of the \$300,000 available has been spent or appropriated for spending in 2012. This leaves \$104,165 to be returned to the GRCF if an extension is not requested. These funds were not awarded due to a challenge grant shortfall from Kent County based on the goal amount set by GRCF (based on a PDR Subcommittee report) of \$350,000 annually to support the PDR Program.

Wills recommends to Kent County and the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board that a written request be made to the GRCF to extend this grant one more year through December 2013. GRCF will likely make the awarding of this extension contingent upon support from the Kent County General Fund for PDR in 2013, so you may want to keep that in mind prior to submitting the grant extension request. Blase and Wills are willing to meet with Marcia Rapp at GRCF to inquire about a PDR grant extension; however, we recommend Kent County Administrative staff also be present. Wills feels it would be best if this meeting occurred before the end of August 2012.

If Kent County were to appropriate \$100,000 to the PDR Program for 2013, this would be 28.6% of \$350,000, which may translate to a \$28,600 grant from GRCF (based on the maximum award amount of \$100,000).

FREY FOUNDATION GRANT: This three year \$250,000 challenge grant was awarded in July 2012 and will end on June 30, 2013. To date, only \$110,837 has been spent or appropriated for spending in 2012 leaving \$139,163 of remaining funds. The grant agreement calls for a third year payment in 2013 of \$80,000 if Kent County allocates \$350,000 for PDR. If this amount is not allocated, the Frey grant amount will be reduced proportionally.

Wills recommends to Kent County and the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board to consider seeking a grant extension in the spring of 2013 to request some of these unspent funds be used to support the PDR Program in 2014. Please note the Frey Foundation will likely make this extension contingent upon funding support from Kent County.

If Kent County were to appropriate \$100,000 to the PDR Program for 2013, this would be 28.6% of \$35,000, which would translate to a \$22,880 grant from the Frey Foundation for 2013.

WEGE FOUNDATION GRANT: The Wege Foundation agreed to support the preservation of the Hefferan Farm in Grattan Township with a \$140,000 grant in 2011. However, negotiations with the Hefferan family were unsuccessful in 2011 and these funds were not used. (The funds were never transferred from the Wege Foundation to Kent County.) Terri McCarthy with the Wege Foundation said these funds would be placed “on hold” at the foundation to see if a deal can be reached in 2012 or 2013 to preserve this farm. The Hefferan family submitted a revised application in 2012 and the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board is in the process of scoring this application. The Wege Foundation (Terri) needs to be informed of where this applications stands after scoring results are finalized.

If negotiations with the Hefferan family are unsuccessful in 2012/13, perhaps the Wege Foundation would be willing to use the funds to support the preservation of another farm in the Parnell Avenue Corridor. The Wege Foundation awards grants for PDR on a per farm basis within a specific geographic region in Vergennes and Grattan Townships.

BIOSOLID PDR PILOT PROGRAM ON LOVINS FARM: In late June 2012, the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board decided to pursue negotiations with Clayton and Anne Lovins of Grattan Township to determine if they would be interested in preserving their farm through PDR, and signing a permanent biosolid land application easement with the Grand Valley Regional Biosolid Authority. The Lovins farm is currently under option with the Kent County PDR Program until November 2012.

The Lovins family agreed to move forward with this option and the Grand Valley Regional Biosolid Authority agreed to move forward with this project at their June 23 meeting. GVRBA has \$40,000 available to preserve a farm in the biosolid application system that is willing to sign a permanent biosolid land application easement. Work must begin soon if a closing will take place before November 15, 2012 when the current appraisal expires.

The language of the permanent biosolid land application easement has not been approved by any party. Kent County legal staff and the BoC must approve all documents prior to closing.

Funding support for this farm to date is planned as following. Please note this has not yet been approved.

<u>TOTAL COST:</u>	\$115,500
Kent County	\$53,696
GRCF	\$10,000

Grattan Twp	\$2,400 (spent in 2011 on appraisal)
Frey	\$7,184
GVRBA	\$40,000

2012 USDA FARM AND RANCLAND GRANT PROPOSAL: A signed agreement between Kent County and the USDA grants Kent County funds to preserve a Bradford Family LLC farm on 14 Mile Road in Sparta Township and the Patterson farm in Courtland Township. Kendra Wills plans to close on these farms in late October or early November 2012. The following is the breakdown in funds for these farms. This has already been approved by the Kent County BoC.

BRADFORD TOTAL COST: \$227,800 (includes closing costs)

USDA FRPP:	\$107,800
Kent County:	\$87,817
GRCF:	\$20,000
Frey:	\$12,183

PATTERSON TOTAL COST: \$90,400 (includes closing costs)

USDA FRPP:	\$32,760
Kent County:	\$40,457
GRCF:	\$10,000
Frey:	\$7,183

GOODFELLOW FARM FUND RAISER: The G & L Orchards 38 acre apple orchard is currently under option agreement with the Kent County PDR Program with an appraisal expiring on November 15, 2012. The total cost to preserve this farm is approximately \$63,800 (which includes closing costs). The USDA FRPP did not award funding for this farm in 2012. Due to this fact, the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board is interested in pursuing a one evening fundraiser to raise enough private funds to preserve this farm.

The Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board has begun to plan this event to be held in early October 2012. The idea is based on a similar event operated by the Lancaster County, PA Farmland Trust.

The Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board has earmarked up to \$17,760 in Kent County General Fund support for the preservation of this farm and the Ag Board would need to seek

permission from the BoC to use these funds in combination with private contributions to preserve this farm.

2013 KENT COUNTY CARRY FORWARD: Please note that there may be unspent funds from 2012 that we would wish to carry forward to 2013 on top of any appropriation by Kent County, which is the same manner approximately \$50,000 was carry forwarded from 2011 to 2012. The exact amount of carry forward dollars will not be known until questions about the use of county funds to support the Goodfellow farm are answered and closings for 2012 have taken place.

2013 USDA FRPP PROPOSAL: Based on the possible scenario of a \$100,000 appropriation from Kent County, combined with a \$28,600 grant from GRFCF and \$22,880 grant from the Frey Foundation a conservative estimate would be a 39% matching grant request to the USDA FRPP program in early 2013, which calculates to \$59,046 from the USDA FRPP for 2013. This does not include grant funds from the Wege Foundation, township contributions or other private contributions, which could be used to request additional USDA FRPP support.

The USDA FRPP requires a minimum of 51% local funding to secure USDA FRPP grant support. Without a contribution from Kent County, GRFCF, Frey, and USDA FRPP grant support would likely not be possible.

Other

The Board asked Wills how much of her work time was devoted to PDR annually. Wills stated that approximately 60 percent of her time was spent on PDR.

Janowiak inquired about Breakfast on the Farm. Wills announced to the Board that there is an online form where they can sign up to volunteer. Antor inquired about how the Breakfast on the Farm event could help support the PDR program. Hudson inquired about the Board having a station at the event. Wills told the Ag Board that they could sign up as a group under the Uniqueness on the Ridge educational station. Heffron, Antor, Janowiak, Reinbold, and Hudson agreed to participate. Blough could not commit to the event due to the Fair starting on the same day. Wills agreed to get “No Farm No Food” bumper stickers and postcards to promote the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Endowment Fund. Heffron suggested obtaining a map that shows farmland that has already been preserved. Wills told the Board that 100 volunteers were needed. Janowiak recommended putting a note out to boy scouts.

The Board agreed that the next board meeting would take place Wednesday August 1st at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned 1:10 PM.

Written by Virginia Vander Veen, Kent/MSU Extension Summer Intern