

Meeting Notes
Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
August 7, 2013
Location: Kent County Fairgrounds, Lowell Michigan

Members Present: Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Gabe Hudson (Ag Interest), Michele VanHouten (Conservation Interest), Denny Heffron (Ag Interest) and Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest),

Members Absent: Tom Antor (County Commissioner) Jenn DeHaan (staff)

Staff Present: Stacy Byers, Board Coordinator

Meeting began at 11:45am.

I. Welcome: Gabe Hudson, Chair.

II. Public Comment: None.

III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest. None declared.

IV. Review and Adoption of June 26, 2013 Minutes.

- a.** Due to the change in location of the meeting, no formal business was conducted. The June 26, 2013 will be reviewed and approved at the September 4, 2013 meeting.

V. Old Business

- i. *Fundraising Event*** - Several Board members felt the fundraising event was a huge success. The event planning committee did a great job organizing and executing a memorable event. Calculations are still being conducted and Denny will bring a total raised at the next meeting. 150 tickets were sold. Power-point presentations ran on a continuous loop to illustrate the Kruitoff farm and other farmland preservation information. VanHouten made a few suggestions for the next event, she suggested the moderator use a microphone, name tags should be made up ahead of time and worn by participants and that the board needs to work to get bigger silent auction items. Food was delicious, using all locally grown products. The Chefs that participated all donated their time and recipes to the event.
- ii. *Outreach and Promotional Material*** - VanHouten is working on her second blog article for the LCV website highlighting the importance of local food and farmland preservation. She has interviewed several local chefs and famers market growers about the connection between growing local foods and criticalness of farmland preservation to the availability of

land for growing products. VanHouten said the article has been picked up by several sites since its release and she is pleased with the positive response. VanHouten will continue to write stories about farmland preservation for LCV.

1. LCV educational campaign – Byers reported that the League of Conservation Voters is considering developing a proposal to administer a more aggressive educational campaign for Farmland Preservation. LCV has been supportive of farmland preservation efforts in the past but feels there has been a lack of public education as to the importance of farmland preservation and how the loss of farmland adversely affects everyone. They are hoping to have a proposal completed by the end of the September. Byers will keep the Board updated as new information about the campaign is developed.
 - iii. Frost and VanOeffelen update – Byers updated the Board on the progress of closing the Frost and VanOeffelen properties. There has still not been a Cooperative Agreement from the FRPP program. Byers recently spoke with the Federal Coordinator, he assured her the Cooperative Agreement was forthcoming. All agreements must be executed by September 1, 2013.

VI. New Business

- i. County budget process – Byers updated the Board on the status of the 2014 Farmland Preservation Budget. Byers reviewed the Budget with Director Betty Blasé. The Administrators recommended budget is scheduled to be announced in September. The Board all agreed it was critical to keep funding for administrative purposes and also for purchasing conservation easements on future properties.
 1. Meeting with Wege, Frey and GRCF – Byers met individually with each of the three Foundations. The outlook for funding from the foundations may be bleak for protecting properties in 2014. The Grand Rapids Community Foundation stated they will not be dedicating funds to the County in 2014 and Frey stated they were also not likely to dedicate funds. The Wege Foundation will likely continue to support the County’s protection efforts.

VII. Other - Heffron announced he would be donating his 83 acre farm to the Kent County Farmland Preservation Program. The Heffron donation would be the first easement donation for Kent County. Heffron also invited members to attend the October 2013 Farmland Preservation Tour out east. More information will be coming at future meetings.

VIII. Public Comment – None was heard

IX. Adjournment – Members left around 1:00 p.m. to tour the fair grounds.

Next Meeting: *September 5, 2013 at 11:30 am at Kent/MSU Extension.*