

## Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

May 6, 2015

Location: Kent/MSU Extension

**Members Present:** Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest) and Russ Slater (Ag Interest)

**Members Absent:** Candace Chivis (County Commissioner), Ed Robinette (Township Interest) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest)

**Staff Present:** Stacy Byers (Board Coordinator), Debbie Green (Kent/MSU Extension Staff), Nathan Kark (Administrator's Office) and Mary Swanson (Administrator's Office)

**Public Present:** None

Meeting began at 11:35 a.m.

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order** – Chairperson, Dennis Heffron
- II. **Public Comment** – None
- III. **Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** – Byers asked to have a financial update added to the agenda under new business. Slater asked to have township workshop also added under new business. Motion to approve agenda by Slater, seconded by Blough. Motion passed.
- IV. **Review and Adoption of April 1, 2015 Minutes** – Motion to accept the minutes as presented by Reinbold, seconded by Blough. Motion passed.
- V. **Old Business**
  - a. 2014 FRPP applications – update Hall, Poulias  
The Hall property is still pending. We are just waiting on the subordination agreement.  
  
The Poulias property – the federal government is reviewing the language in the paperwork and comparing it with the new Farm Bill guidelines.
  - b. 2013 FRPP Status – Frost and Vanoeffelen  
The Frost property has already closed.  
  
The Vanoeffelen property status has not changed much and is still pending. If this property does not close before the August deadline, the federal government will reallocate the funds they have set aside to preserve this property. Currently the money set aside for this property includes funds from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Frey Foundation, federal government and Kent County.

Reinbold suggested that, to get things moving, she could contact the Vanoeffelen's and try to help them get in contact with the oil & gas lease company to get a definitive answer either yes or no on their contract. Swanson said that she will check with the county's corporate council to check for any conflict of interest for Reinbold to step in and help move this along.

c. 2015 Application Cycle – Malone

The Malone property – the paperwork has gone through the cycle and has been turned in to the federal government for them to process.

d. 2015 Application Cycle

The Kent County Board of Commissioners approved the application cycle dates of May 1 – July 31, 2015. Byers will have her assistant, Christian, contacting all of the current standing applicants to see if they would like to continue in the Farmland and Ranch Protection Program for the coming year. Farm owners are only able to continue in the program for 3 years before they are required to re-apply to the program.

VI. **New Business**

a. Survey to landowner participants – Kendra Wills

Kendra is doing a long-term outcome evaluation on work she did with farmland preservation farmers. This project will include a list of questions with comparison of before farmers join the farmland preservation program and after they completed the program.

b. Township Updates

Slater gave an update on the outcome of his visit to Byron Township. Blough said that he has not completed all of his township board meeting visits yet and Heffron's visit to Courtland Township's meeting has been postponed by the board.

c. Foundation Updates – Frey Foundation

Byers and Heffron had a meeting with Steve Wilson at the Frey Foundation to thank them for their past support with funding farmland preservation. Steve informed Byers and Heffron that they would no longer be giving their financial support to Kent County projects. The reason given was that the Frey Foundation likes to do partnership funding and because Kent County was not donating funds to this cause, they decided to remove their funding. Discussion followed regarding new ventures such as the Leelanau County Michigan Fruit Belt and the Grand Traverse Co. Regional Land Conservancy.

d. Financial Update - Byers

Byers handed out a sheet regarding the funds from 2002-2013 and how they had been allocated for farmland preservation activities. Discussion followed regarding Kent County funding.

e. **Township Workshop – Slater**

Slater discussed holding a half day conference/workshop to talk to area townships about land use. This informational workshop would be held for township officials, supervisors and planning committee members. The workshop's purpose would be to educate the attendees on the importance of farmland preservation. Discussion then ensued as to how difficult it may be to get township officials to attend a half day workshop. Another idea was to see if this effort might be presented as a breakout session at the yearly Michigan Township Association meeting. More will be discussed at next month's meeting of the Agricultural Preservation Board meeting on Wednesday, June 3.

VII. **Other**

Just as a point of interest, there will be a presentation made at the Thursday, May 14 Kent County Board of Commissioners meeting during the Public Comment Section when United Growth will be giving the county a \$2,000 donation.

VIII. **Public Comment – None**

IX. **Adjournment – Motion to adjourn made by Reinbold and seconded by Blough at 12:42 p.m. Motion passed.**

Next meeting is June 3, 2015 at 11:30 a.m. at the Kent/MSU Extension Office