

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

September 2, 2015

Kent/MSU Extension

11:30 AM

Members Present: Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Candace Chivis (County Commissioner), Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Conservation Interest) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest)

Staff Present: Stacy Byers (Board Coordinator), Christian Smith (program assistant, via phone) and Nathan Kark (Administrator's Office)

Members/Staff Absent: Mary Swanson (Administrator's Office)

Public Present:

Meeting began at 11:36 a.m.

I. Welcome and Call to Order –Michelle VanHouten

II. Public Comment- none

III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest

IV. Review and Adoption of August 5, 2015 Minutes *Ed motioned to approve and Carl seconded. Motion passed.*

V. Old Business

-Oct 14th Event- Going to be sending out invitations next week, brochures to local officials, township, city, village, commissioners and associated organizations (LCV etc.). Wrapping up speakers to invite and will be at Hall farm at 10 am. Suggestions to invite: director of Local First, Metro Council. Tentative Agenda: Stacy opens and introduces board, go over preserved farms, brief history of program, wrapping up with program funders and pass to Ellen to speak, then a county commissioner to speak and a landowner, Denny ends and hands out signs to landowners.

-Signs: Stacy showed new design, with less text than before. "Permanently Preserved Property: # Acres Kent County Agricultural Preservation Program". Road commission installs signs. Board members wondered about the # of the preserved farm, and if the logo could be made bigger. Could the larger green sign be placed on the barn? The larger sign was suggested to be the one to be presented at the ceremony.

a. 2014 FRPP applications – update Hall, Poulias

The Hall Farm closed in July of 2015. The Poulias Farm is still pending. Stacy is hopeful we will be able to close the Poulias farm in October.

b. 2013 FRPP Status – Frost and Vanoeffelen

-Vanoeffelen: It was discussed to use the AFT money (110K grant) to help the budget, but the active mineral rights ease was a barrier. Discussion over the exclusion of acreage for drilling rigs was had. The specifics of allowed drilling mechanisms (directional boring) were also discussed. Having floating excluded acreage may be able to address surface mining, to be explored later. The board was encouraged to let go of the Vanoeffelen easement. Mary and Linda from the county would be a good meeting to have to discuss these mineral conflicts. *Ed made a motion to withdraw the Vanoeffelen property from the county program and Carl seconded. Motion passed.*

c. 2015 Application Cycle – Malone

-We have enough money from the Wege funds (unused from Wittenbach) to protect the rest of the Malone property, with about half funded through the federal program. The AFT money could be used for a future property. Discussion was had about the accuracy of the appraisals, Malone may have been too low compared to Hall; perhaps could be done with a maximum development potential considering the potential for new road construction. It was suggested that a new appraiser be obtained for Malone- perhaps Mark Williams. Dave Yankee was the boards' regular appraiser until he retired. The money that is assigned to Malone must stay in the Grattan area, but may be able to go into neighboring districts.
-AFT Funding: should the board do a small parcel to do totally local funds, or go for a federal match? Bradford in Sparta has small parcels near preserved parcels, these small (30-50 acres) could be done with just AFT funds.

d. 2015 Application Cycle

i. Review spreadsheet of 2015 Ranking – approve properties to move forward

Denny made a motion to go forward with 100% AFT funds for the smaller Bradford parcels and Michelle seconded, motion carried. Another motion was made by Denny and seconded by Michelle to reserve Kruitoffs as a backup parcel to preserve. Russ made a motion for Hefferan as a backup parcel and seconded by Michelle. Motion carried.

VI. New Business

-Russ gave an update on Healthy Waters Working Farms as a partner in land preservation as well as the Potawatomi Land Conservancy. A potential conflict is NRCS preventing farmers from harvesting filter strips that could be used to recirculate nutrients. The permanent removal of productive lands is problematic.

-Stacy will give an update on the Portland conference next month.

-In moving forward on the Oct 14th event, the tri-fold should be emailed to board members, and refreshments need to be decided on for approximately 50 attendees.

VII. Other

VIII. Public Comment- none

IX. Adjournment at 12:55 pm

Michelle motioned to adjourn and Russ seconded, motion carried.

Next Meeting October 7, 2015 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension.