

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board
January 6, 2016
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 (Ag Interest) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest)

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

Meeting began at 11:38 a.m.

- I. Welcome and Call to Order** by Chair Denny Heffron
- II. Public Comment** - None
- III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** – Addition to agenda by Stacy, 2015-2016 Selection Criteria Review. No Possible Conflict of Interest.
- IV. Review and Adoption of November 30, 2015 Minutes** – *Motion made by Ed to accept November 30, 2015 minutes and Suzie seconded. Motion passed.*
- V. Old Business**
 - a. Update on Poulias Closing** – The Poulias family has been in the process of farmland preservation for approximately 3 years which has been a very long process because of the new Farm Bill guidelines that took affect just last year. The day after the Poulias' called to back out of the process, Denny and Stacy had a meeting with them and they were encouraged to change their minds and see the process through to the end. At this meeting, Barb Poulias brought to Stacy's attention that they had signed a gas and oil lease for the property about 1 ½ years ago. The title was searched a second time and no lease has been recorded.

Board discussion followed as to what would be the next steps considering this new development and what the consequences could be to the farmer or the process that has been completed. The funding has all been put in place and all the items have been checked off on the Feds checklist for closing on this property. It was suggested that Nathan check with Linda Howell, an Assistant Corporate Counsel, about this scenario and ask the county's recommendations if we should

proceed with preserving this property. *Russ made a motion to proceed with the Poulias farm contingent on Linda's approval. This motion was seconded by Carl and the motion passed.*

Potentially, this farm could go to closing by the end of January, if all goes well.

- b. Year-end Summary** – Stacy prepared a summary of the properties that have been closed on or are pending from 2013-2015. This summary was handed out to the board. If you have any changes or modifications, please let Stacy know.
- c. Bradford appraisal update** – The appraisal has been delayed due to a family emergency and should be completed by January 15, 2016
- d. Malone B appraisal update** – The appraisal has been completed. The Malone A property of 100 acres was appraised at \$1,100/acre in 2014. This appraisal was done by Mark DeHollander and the Malone's have accepted this price, as well as the Feds. The Malone B property of 57 acres was appraised at \$1,900/acre in 2015. This appraisal was done by Williams & Associates. The funding for this property will come from leftover funds from the Wege Foundation.

Stacy and Denny will be setting up a meeting with the Malone's to try to explain the discrepancies of the two appraisals of their property.

- e. Financial standing update** – Stacy put together a budget showing the current farms to be preserved and the expenses and funds being used, both Federal and Wege. Russ had some questions and they were addressed by Stacy.

The Wege funds received are generally used for the easement, the appraisal and the closing costs. The Federal funds use to be up to 50% of the funding and currently they are at 35% of the funding. There is a possibility that the Federal funding could increase with new appraisals.

The 3 farm properties that the board will be working to close on this year are: Frost, Poulias and Malone A. Because of the long processing time, the Malone property will need to have a new appraisal done because it is older than 12 months. Board discussion followed regarding the funding for Malone A and B and the cost of the appraisal.

VI. New Business

- a. 2016 Meeting Schedule Calendar** – Stacy has prepared a listing of meeting dates for 2016. If you need a copy, one can be e-mailed to you. Carl Blough and

Michele Van Houten have just been notified by the Board of Commissioners that they have been approved for another 3 year term on the Ag Preservation Board. Also, Candace Chivis has been re-appointed to this committee for another year.

- b. 2016 ACEP submission** – (*Name Change: Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection - FFRP is now the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program – ACEP*) Stacy was reading the Land Trust Alliance newsletter last week and noticed that the Federal deadline for applications is set for January 15, 2016. Normally this deadline is in February or March of each year. Because of this quickly approaching deadline, Stacy had a conference call with Mary Swanson and Nathan regarding how to proceed with new applications.

It was decided that the Kent County Ag Preservation Board would proceed with the appraisals scheduled for the 3 new properties (Farrell – 79 acres in Ada Township, Hefferan – 76 acres and Momber – 109 acres). These appraisals will be needed by January 25 so the Board of Commissioners can look at them by February 15.

Because of the short deadline time, the board decided to work on just one property first and get that into the federal program. *Suzie made a motion to choose the Farrell property and put it on the Fast Track for federal funding. Russ seconded the motion and the motion passed.*

The board was informed that the application cycle for the Wege Foundation, which is usually done in the fall, is now due on February 23. The applications will be reviewed for funding in April.

- c. Election of Officers** – The board discussed if anyone would like to run for any of the offices: Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. Currently the people in those positions are: Denny Heffron – Chairman, Michele Van Houten – Vice-Chairman and Suzie Reinbold – Secretary. *Ed made a motion to keep the same people appointed to their same roles for 2016. Candace seconded the motion and the motion passed.*
- d. 2015-2016 Selection Criteria Review** – Stacy passed out copies of the “Ranking System for Landowner Applications” to the board. Stacy suggested that there were no changes needed because there is no Federal money. However, there are opportunities for funds from non-Federal sources and Stacy will add that wording to the criteria. The most important thing to check for is if the property owners have signed any oil & gas leases for the property in question.

Discussion came up about having another “Landowner Workshop” during the application cycle to get more interest in filling out an application. Suzie suggested having a workshop in February some time and the location could be in Lowell, Oakfield or Courtland Township. The list of invitees would include: interested property owners, the current applicants and possibly landowners with over 40 acres. The only challenge with a mailing is that the cost is \$1,300-\$1,400. A possibility for funding this mailing would be to ask for contributions towards educating people about farmland preservation.

Ed made a motion to approve the 2015-2016 Selection Criteria. Candace seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Russ made a motion to keep the application cycle from May 1 – July 31, 2016. Suzie seconded the motion and the motion passed.

VII. Other - None

VIII. Public Comment – None

IX. Adjournment – *Suzie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Russ seconded the motion and the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.*

The next meeting is February 3, 2016 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension.