

**Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting Minutes**  
**February 3, 2016**  
**Kent/MSU Extension**  
**11:30 AM**

**Members Present:** Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest)

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

**Member/Staff Absent:** Candace Chivis (County Commissioner), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest) and Russ Slater (Ag Interest)

**Public Present:** Diane Jones (County Commissioner)

Meeting began at 11:33 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** – There is no Conflict of Interest declared with Denny Heffron and the Hefferan farm property.
- IV. Review and Adoption of January 6, 2016 Minutes** – *Motion made by Ed to accept January 6, 2016 minutes with the correction of the Heffron Farm name to Hefferan Farm. Michele seconded and motion passed.*
- V. Old Business**
  - a. Update on Poulias Closing – now withdrawn from participation** – The Kent County Attorney asked for a copy of the oil and gas lease to look over before closing. Barb Poulias was asked for a copy and she replied no and asked to be withdrawn from the program.

Stacy said that the oil and gas lease would not have killed the deal with the federal government. An affidavit of non-production would just have to be included with the paperwork. For farmers to get out of automatic renewal of oil and gas leases, all they need to do is prove that there has been no production on the land before the end of the 5 year lease.

A spreadsheet was handed out listing the farm properties (Malone A and B, Bradford, Farrell and Hefferan) and funding (Federal Contribution, grant money, appraisal costs, and closing costs) for each property to be preserved in the 2016 cycle.

- b. Bradford appraisal update** – The appraisal for the Bradford property came in valued higher than expected. The Fruit Ridge area property is not available to receive funding from the Wege Foundation so the funding sources that will be used are the Frey Foundation (\$11,000) and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation (\$14,000) funds. Also, the Bradfords will be donating approximately \$21,000.

This property is not without its own set of challenges. This property has three parcels (40 acres, 80 acres and 60 acres) that were combined into one, so the title search was a little bit of a challenge. Greenstone has surveyed all of the three parcels that were combined into one. However, we had the same challenge with the Van Oefflen property. This property also has an oil and gas lease that will expire in 2017. The state easement language does allow for oil and gas leases on the property. Because of these oil and gas leases, the farmers/landowners need to be informed about reading the “find print” before they sign on the dotted line.

Discussion followed among the board regarding the farmers/property owners rights regarding signing up for an oil and gas lease and what the lease really covers and what can be done on the farmers property for the five years of the lease.

- c. Malone a, b update** – The Malone A property of 100 acres has been surveyed and appraised at \$1,100/acre and we paid for this property appraisal. Now we have the Malone B property of 56 acres that has not been surveyed and this was appraised at \$1,900/acre. The question came up as to whether the property owner should be paying for the second parcel of land (Malone B) to be surveyed. Normally the board pays for the appraisal and the property owner pays for the survey. After some discussion, *Ed made a motion that the board should pay for the survey for the Malone B parcel and Carl seconded. Motion passed.*
- d. Farrell Property update** – This property is 178 acres in Ada Township and the appraisal came in at \$152,000. There was a discussion with Pat, the father, about preserving his farm property, but he decided he did not want to do the preservation because it would be too much work. The Linda (his daughter) talked to her father about preserving the property and got the preservation back on track.

The funding to be used for this property is \$100,000 from the Wege Funds that were set aside for the Poulias property and \$54,000 from Ada Township.

The Hefferan property appraisal has been received. The funding for this property will be state funds rather than federal funds because the state will move quicker than the federal government. NRCS Federal match funds will also be applied for to be used for the Hefferan property.

The Momber property appraisal should be coming back soon.

Discussion followed regarding the shifting of credit money through PA116. These have not been paid out yet for the 2015 year. If the lawmakers in Lansing do vote on the PA116 money soon, there could be an impact on the 2015 funds.

**VI. New Business**

- a. **2016 Wege Grant** – Stacy has a meeting set up in March with Ellen Satterly and/or Mary with the Wege Foundation to discussion funding for Ag Preservation.

**VII. Other - None**

**VIII. Public Comment** – Commissioner Diane Jones was in attendance because she would like to keep up with what is happening in her district in regards to Ag Preservation

**IX. Adjournment** – *Ed made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Carl seconded the motion and the motion passed.* Meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.

The next meeting is March 2, 2016 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension