

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting

April 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) and Russ Slater (Ag Interest)

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

Member/Staff Absent: Nathan Kark (Administrator's Office) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation 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** – Commissioner Jones is attending these meetings to learn about the activities in her district.
- III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** - None
- IV. Review and Adoption of February 3, 2016 Minutes** – *Motion made by Ed to accept February 3, 2016 minutes. Russ seconded and motion passed.*
- V. Old Business**
 - a. Bradford Update** – There are two things happening with the Bradford parcel. First, it was discovered that the parcel to be preserved has already been preserved. While searching the title, it was discovered that the ID numbers had been changed. The original parcel was 37 acres and the new parcel is 38 acres and just west of the original site. Bradford's would like 3 acres set aside along with the farm buildings.

Second, also discovered during the title search, the Bradford's have sold the mineral rights to Bishop Land Services. The mineral rights were sold after the parcel of land had been preserved. Stacy said that it is unlikely that Bishop's

would subordinate to the Ag Preservation Board. It is not like we have not dealt with this kind of situation before, but it just makes it more challenging to preserve the land.

Because this situation has happened before, the board members had a discussion as to the best way to proceed with preserving the Bradford property and what are the options. Stacy would like to follow the process through as far as possible. The County's Assistant Corporate Counsel, Linda Howell, had a meeting with Stacy and Mary regarding the County's recommendations. The county would like to wait for the 5 year mineral rights agreement to end and then have the Bradford's file the papers for non-production or approach Bishop Land Services and see if they will subordinate to the Ag Preservation Board.

Other questions to be answered are: will the AFT funds be able to be put on hold for another 1-2 years waiting for the 5 year agreement to expire and if so, will Bradford's be willing to wait to have that parcel of land preserved?

Stacy will be checking with AFT to see if they would be open to holding the funds allotted to the Bradford preservation until next year and she will also check with the Bishop Land Services to see if they would be willing to subordinate.

- b. Malone a, b update** – The Malone preservation is moving right along. The appraisal needs to be updated because the old appraisal is more than 12 months old. There are sight visits to be made and then signatures will be needed.

Also, Stacy has been talking with the Weeks farm owner and they are interested in preserving their farm. Stacy has been talking with Bill, who is one of the sons of Ray Weeks. Denny said that Tom, another one of Ray Weeks sons, might be a better contact.

- c. Farrell/Hefferan Property update** – The Farrell property, which is located in Ada Township, has decided that they are not ready to move on in the process of preserving their property. The family did not feel comfortable moving forward in 2016, but may be ready in the 2017 cycle. So their application has been removed from the 2016 cycle.

The positive outcome of this preservation application is the good working relationship with the Ada Township office. This may lead to future dealings on more Ada Township farm properties that may be involved in preservation.

Hefferan property owner, Bob, is excited to be moving forward in the preservation process. This parcel is 78 acres and the funding will be 45% Federal money and 55% Wege Foundation money. The appraisal has been completed and the survey needs to be completed. The ACEP Program (formerly FRPP) paperwork needs to be submitted to the NCRCS office.

- i. Wege Grant** – The Wege Foundation funding cycle is in the spring and also in the fall. Stacy talked with Mary at the foundation and she suggested that the board wait until spring (late February/early March) to request funding for farmland preservation. This means that the board could possibly get funding for the Hefferan property in 2017.

Currently, after closing on the Malone A and B properties, there should be approximately \$20,000 leftover from the previous fund cycle from the Wege Foundation. The question was raised as to either return the money to the foundation or use it towards the Hefferan property.

VI. New Business

Mary talked about the grant cycle for the county and noted important Kent County Commissioner Board meeting dates. Also mentioned was the 2016 Application cycle which is May 1-July 31. Mary, Stacy, Nathan and Linda had a criteria meeting regarding the new wording for the applications about oil and gas leases on the properties that want to be preserved.

The group discussed how to educate/update the farmers, who already have oil and gas leases that are about to expire, about the positives and negatives of renewing their 5 year leases on their property.

VII. Other - None

VIII. Public Comment - None

IX. Adjournment – *Ed made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Russ seconded the motion and the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.*

The next meeting is May 4, 2016 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension.