

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting
June 7, 2017
Kent/MSU Extension
11:30 AM

Members Present: Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Ag Interest), Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest) and Robert Womack (County Commissioner)

Members Absent: Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest) and Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest)

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

- I. Welcome and Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 11:30 a.m. by Vice-Chairman, Michele Van Houten because of the absence of Chairman, Dennis Heffron
- II. Public Comment** - None
- III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** - None
- IV. Review and Adoption of March 1, 2017 Minutes** – Carl made a motion to accept the March 1, 2017 meeting minutes. Russ seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- V. New Business**
 - a. 2017 Application Cycle update** – Stacy stated that 1,400 postcards were mailed out to landowners and she also sent out some application packets to a few specific landowners. She has already received two applications from this mailing and the farms are in Grattan Township. Just a reminder that the application cycle ends on July 31, 2017.

Stacy is setting up two landowner meetings: one in Sparta and one in Lowell Township that should last about an hour. These are informational meetings for landowners thinking about farmland preservation so they can ask questions about the program. The meeting at the Sparta Township Hall will be on Tuesday, July 11, 2017 at noon and the meeting at the Lowell Township Hall will be on Monday, July 17, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. right before the Lowell Township Board meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Stacy will be sending out postcards to the landowners to let them know about these two informational meetings that will be taking place in July.

- b. Ultimate Farmland Preservation tour update** – Stacy and Dennis hosted a Preservation of Development Rights Tour out east on April 21-23, 2017. Michele and Russ went along on the trip. Michele thought it was a very successful trip with a diverse group of people (Township Officials from: Gaines, Sparta, Grattan, Alpine and Tyrone). The conversations that they had in the van while traveling had some very good discussions. When they returned, Russ set up a meeting with Commissioner Jim Saalfeld to discuss how this trip could impact Kent County in the future.

There is a trip being planned for the fall and the focus is on getting more County Commissioners involved as participants.

- c. June 14, Presentation to House Ag Committee** – Representative Albert has requested someone to give a presentation on Farmland Preservation to the House Ag Committee. Stacy was scheduled to give a presentation until she received a call this morning saying that the June 14 meeting has been cancelled. Therefore, the presentation has been rescheduled for the fall session.
- d. Roth easement/ACEP update** – Stacy reported that she has received a call from Brian and that the cooperative agreements should be ready by the end of summer. The Roth easement is one of the properties that has an oil & gas lease still in effect until sometime in 2017 with the Texas Oil & Gas Company. The company has been notified and asked if they would subordinate the lease. Most leases just rollover into a second term for an undisclosed amount of time.

The Bradford easement also has an oil & gas lease attached to their easement. Their gas company would like to just let the lease expire. The challenge is that you need to have the lease discharged from the gas company and then the landowner needs to go to the courthouse and have the lease removed from their property (chain of title). The easiest way to take care of the oil & gas lease is to have the gas company subordinate the lease.

VI. Old Business

- a. Review of Meeting Schedule** – There are no meetings scheduled for July or August, so the next meeting will be held on September 6, 2017. This is a very important meeting because Stacy will have the scoring done on the new properties at that time.

Seeing as this is the last meeting that Carl Blough will attend as a board member, Michele thanked Carl, on behalf of the Ag Preservation Board, for his 7-8 years of service on the board. Carl handed Stacy a copy of his resignation letter and Stacy read it out loud to the board. Carl said that he would still like to be kept in the loop of what is going on with the board, but he will also be starting his job with the Corn Growers and now also with the Fire Department Board.

Mary was asked if the job has been posted and if anyone has applied yet. The job has been posted on the Public Posting for open board positions, however no applications have been received.

Mary also wanted to pass along that Dennis will be talking about Ag Preservation to the Board of Commissioners on June 22 during the MSU Extension update.

VII. Public Comment - None

VIII. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

No Meeting scheduled for July and August.

Next meeting date is September 6, 2017 at 11:30 AM at Kent/MSU Extension.