

Kent County Agriculture Preservation Board Meeting

January 3, 2018

Kent/MSU Extension

11:30 a.m.

**Members Present:** Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Ag Interest), Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest) and Steven Versluis (Ag Interest)

**Members Absent:** Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest) and Robert Womack (County Commissioner)

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

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 11:34 a.m. by Chairman, Dennis Heffron.
- II. **Public Comment** – Guest, Scott Moton made inquiries regarding the board members backgrounds regarding being raised on a farm. He also expressed his opinion on the preservation of the Bradford Farm.
- III. **Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** – Dennis Heffron stated that he would abstain from any vote regarding the Hefferan or Sieracki farms. Michele also stated that she would also abstain from any vote regarding the Hefferan farm because of her family connection.
- IV. **Review and Adoption of December 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes** – As the board members read over the minutes, Stacy had a change under the New Business – 2019 Budget Request item. A motion was made by Ed Robinette to accept the minutes with the requested change. Michele Van Houten seconded the motion and the motion passed. The change will be made and the minutes forwarded to the county.
- V. **New Business**
  - a. **ACEP 2018 Deadline** – The deadline for the 2018 program is February 16, 2018. The board's first choice for funding is the Sieracki Farm. This farm should be all set and ready to go after the appraisal is completed. There is no

survey needed and the funding will be 65% Wege funds and 35% Federal funds.

There was discussion by the board members as to what would be a second option to have funded for the 2018 program. The members discussed the options available from the Parnell Corridor from the rankings listing. It was decided that the second option would be the Stein farm. Mr. Stein is really motivated to preserve his 35 acres and the only thing needed is an updated appraisal. A motion was made by Russ Slater to update the appraisal on the Stein farm. Steve Versluis seconded the motion and the motion passed.

- b. Review and Approve 2018 Selection Criteria** – Stacy handed out a copy of the 2017 Selection Criteria with changes/updates printed in red. She suggested that the board members take this copy home and let her know of any changes/updates that they would like to make. The board will then vote on the new version at the February meeting.

Stacy highlighted the items that she suggested for changes/updates and the board decided to accept the Selection Criteria with her changes. Ed Robinette made a motion to accept the 2018 Selection Criteria with the suggested changes. Russ Slater seconded the motion and the motion passed.

- c. Seif Farm** – There has been a new development on the previously preserved Seif Farm. One of the relatives would like to build a house on the preserved land/easement. Discussion followed regarding if this is even possible. The result is that the house will then have to stay with the farm if it is ever sold.

It was suggested that a new bullet point be added to the meeting agenda, “Other Business”.

## **VI. Old Business – Updates**

- a. Sieracki and Hefferan Updates** – As mentioned before, the Sieracki Farm is all set and ready to go after Stacy receives the appraisal results.

The Hefferan Farm needs to still find 75% more in funding. Currently the Ada Township Board is willing to pay for 25% of the funding and even more funding is possible. The challenge is that the Ada Township Board meeting is

happening to soon to present something before their board to get approval for more funding.

- b. Bradford** – The changing of the trust and the release of the oil and gas lease have both been completed. The next step is the release of the American Farmland Trust fund, but those are not released until the fall. There was discussion about whether Kent County would lend the Agricultural Preservation Board the money to get this property finalized now instead of having to wait until the fall. When the funds do become available in the fall, then Kent County would get their money reimbursed. Stacy said that she would talk to Linda at the county and see if this is even a possibility.
- c. Roth** – The easement language revisions have been completed on this farm and there is a possibility of a closing in February.

Stacy informed the members that there will be another Landowner Workshop held in June or July in northern Kent County somewhere. It was suggested that Sparta would be a good location for this workshop.

The board members received a copy of the 2018 Meeting dates and times and an updated Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Member information listing. There were some corrections to be made: 1) remove Carl Blough's name and information, 2) update Russ Slater's information and 3) add Ed Robinette's contact information.

- VII. Public Comment** – Guest, Scott Moton expressed his opinion regarding the accesskent website and made suggestions on how the Agricultural Preservation Board could make itself more visible to the public

- VIII. Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 12:46 p.m.

Next meeting is February 7, 2018 at 11:30 a.m. at the Kent/MSU Extension Office