

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting
March 7, 2018
Kent/MSU Extension
11:30 A.M.

Members Present: Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Ag Interest), Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest), Steven Versluis (Ag 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** – In January, the Farm Bureau hosted the Secretary of Agriculture at Ed Robinette's farm. Ed and Denny talked to the secretary about the issue of reducing the government red tape when preserving agricultural land. The secretary said that he and the president agree on how important agricultural land and migrant labor are to the country.

- III. **Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** – Denny Heffron stated, as before, that he would abstain from any vote regarding the Hefferan or Sieracki farms.

- IV. **Review and Adoption of January 3, 2018 Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made by Ed Robinette to accept the minutes and Steve Versluis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

- V. **New Business**
 - a. **2018 application cycle dates and landowner workshop** – Stacy mentioned that the 2018 application cycle is May-July 31, 2018. The topic was raised whether to have one or two Landowner Workshops for this year. It was decided that there will be one Landowner Workshop during the day at the Sparta Township Hall and one evening Landowner Workshop in Lowell.

The workshop at the Sparta Township Hall will be held on Wednesday, June 6 around 12:00-12:30 p.m. It was also decided that the next Ag. Preservation Board Meeting, which is also on Wednesday, June 6, will be held at the Sparta Township Hall at 11:30 a.m. before the Landowner Workshop.

The workshop in Lowell will be held on either Wednesday, June 20 or 27th in the evening.

VI. Old Business - Updates

- a. ACEP 2018 Deadline** – The Sieracki farm (Grattan Township) application was submitted for preservation for this year. Stacy does not foresee any problems with the application. The appraisal has been completed (\$3,700/acre). The land is 100% agricultural land and the soil is 97% prime. The township is contributing money towards the preservation and she is hoping for an end of the year closing.
- b. Review 2018 Selection Criteria revisions** – Stacy handed out approved copies of the selection criteria after receiving board member suggestions for revisions.
- c. Sieracki and Hefferan Updates** – The Hefferan family wants to move forward with the preservation, but slowly. The funds for this preservation will be from AFT Funds and the township will provide 25-30% of the easement cost. This farm would be a good candidate for the 2019 cycle and better for the family as well.
- d. Bradford** – This farm's paperwork is completed and now just waiting for the AFT Funds to be released in April-May.
- e. Roth** – This farm has been slowed down because of governmental red tape which includes technical reviews of the appraisal and the easement.
- f. Seif** – This farm has become very messy because the 9 children are fighting over the property. There is one son who would like to build a house on the property, however he is unable to get a mortgage to build the house. The farm would have to build the house. Not a good situation.

VII. Public Comment – Public Guest, Scott Moton, expressed his opinions about preserving working farms and had ideas about possible funding sources. He also apologized to Stacy about previous comments regarding auctioneers.

VIII. Adjournment – Russ Slater made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ed Robinette seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

Next meeting date is June 6, 2018 at 11:30 AM
at Sparta Township Hall before the Landowner Workshop