

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting Minutes
September 5, 2018
MSU Extension Office
11:30 A.M.

Members Present: *Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Ag Interest), and Steven Versluis (Ag Interest)*

Members Absent: Robert Womack (County Commissioner), Michele Van Houten

Staff Present: Stacy Byers (Board Coordinator), Christian Smith (Program Staff)

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order-** The meeting was called to order at 11:32 a.m. by Chairman, Dennis Heffron
- II. **Public Comment-** None
- III. **Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest-** None
- IV. **Review and Adoption of May 2, 2018 Meeting Minutes (Our last meeting was at the Sparta Township Hall, in conjunction with the landowner workshop – there was no quorum at the meeting therefore, the May 2, minutes were not approved and no formal business took place)** Ed motioned and Suzie seconded to approve the minutes. Stacy said the Sparta workshop did not have large attendance but the quality of their applications was high as both families applied and scored well.
- V. **New Business**
 - a. **Staff Changes – impact on Ag Board** Stacy enumerated the staff changes within the County, as Mary and Elliot have stepped down. Next Monday Denny and Stacy have set a meeting with the new administrator and the assistant to educate them on our program. MSU Extension Director Betty Blase has also left, Erin Moore has replaced her, but Erin has five counties that she administers, and will have her own learning curve. Steven asked how much internal education can be encouraged within the County, and Stacy has hope there will be an official liaison appointed to our program.
 - b. **Budget Request - \$300 K**
 - i. **Narrative** At the recommendation of Mary and the Chairman of the BOC, the Ag Board should make a formal request for bridge funding for the program. This request should be considered a continuation of the earlier budget from 2010, and this would be a request to reinstate those funds. The request is \$350k, \$50k of which is for administration costs, \$37k for Stacy and \$13k for other overhead. Since the 2014 cut our board has had to ask foundations for administrative costs,

and they are fatigued with paying for administration costs. The \$1.2 Million current budget for identified farms includes \$81K from Wege, and would include \$840K from other foundations and the additional \$300k from Kent County. This request will be discussed at the County Budget Meetings, which board members were encouraged to attend. Dennis pointed out that the \$300k figure was arrived at with consultation that foundations would be more likely to fund easements with this level of commitment from the County. Dennis talked about a survey of potential partners in millage procurement, including Burt Blakes group, “friends of farmland preservation”, that wish to go forward with a millage request for farmland preservation next year. Millage options were discussed with other potential partner groups, and options for parkland and/or open space preservation inclusion. Ed and Steven discussed the amount of millages in the County perhaps causing voter fatigue in their support.

c. 2018 Application Cycle

- i. Review ranking, make preliminary suggestions** - The 2018 cycle wrapped up on July 31st, points allocated and applicants were ranked, with assistance from Elliot at the County and Christian. Seiracki has 50% of their funds committed from Wege, and with the \$300k from the County the easement could likely close this year. Sub-regions were discussed, with the rationale to spread preservation efforts around the county, Stacy pointed out that with a dedicated funding the program could theoretically preserve the top ranking farm from each region every year. Stacy recommended moving forward with Kruitoff, Momber and Seiracki as funds allow, as well with Hefferan from Ada, as the township has some dedicated funds for preservation. Suzie motioned to approve the ranking, Ed seconded and the motion carried, Russ motioned, and Ed seconded, to prioritize the properties of Kruitoff, Momber, Seiracki, Hefferan (Ada) to the top of the list for preservation. Russ amended the motion to put Roth as a fifth option waiting until the State Application for funds , Ed seconded, amendment carried. Motion passed.

VI. Old Business - Updates

- a. Bradford-** AFT won't release funds until October, but then we should close in October.
- b. Roth-** Waiting on federal review of the easement language and appraisal.
- c. ACEP**

VII. Public Comment- None

VIII. Adjournment: Suzie made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Steven seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

Next meeting date is October 3, 2018 at 11:30 AM at MSU Extension Office.