

**Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 6, 2019**  
**Kent County MSU Extension Office**  
**11:30 A.M.**

**Members Present:** Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Gretchen Mousel (Conservation Interest), Dan Oesch (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), and Russ Slater (Ag Interest)

**Members Absent:** Commissioner Matt Kallman and Matthew VanZetten (County Administrator's Office)

**Staff Present:** Stacy Byers (Board Coordinator) and Debbie Green (Kent County MSU Extension)

**Public Present:** Carl Blough

- I. Welcome and Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 11:37 a.m. by Chairman, Dennis Heffron.
- II. Public Comment** – Carl Blough (former Ag. Preservation Board Member) with the State Corn Growers Board attended the meeting.
- III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** – Dennis Heffron reiterated his past declaration of possible conflict of interest.
- IV. Review and Adoption of January 2019 Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made by Ed Robinette to accept the January 2019 meeting minutes. Suzie seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- V. Introduction of New Members** - There were two new members added to the board to replace Steve Versluis and Michele Van Houten. Dan Oesch will be taking over for Steve Versluis and Gretchen Mousel will be taking over for Michele VanHouten. Current board members introduced themselves and what their interests are on this board.
- VI. New Business**
  - i. 2019 Update Presentation to Board of Commissioners** – There will be a presentation made to the Kent County Board of Commissioners on Thursday, March 28 regarding the work of the Agricultural Preservation Board. Everyone

was encouraged to attend to show support for Ag. Preservation. Stacy mentioned that she will be meeting with Matthew VanZetten after this board meeting.

Gretchen requested a copy of the Ag. Preservation Board budget and Stacy will get that information to her. Dennis went on to explain some of the past history that the board has had with the county and matching funds partnerships, such as the WEGE Foundation. Stacy expressed that she and Dennis are very optimistic about the new leadership in the county ranks.

## **VII. Old Business - Updates**

- a. Bradford** – The Bradford property has closed last month (February 2019), preserving 35 acres which is the homestead. The funding for this was through the American Farmland Trust Fund money and a Bradford donation.

Stacy shared that her retired contact at the American Farmland Trust, Bob Wagner, has now been hired as a consultant with the same company. She also mentioned that the State Ag. Preservation Board may have money available from PA116 in October of this year for preservation programs. Also, there may be a possibility of an enrollment cycle for farmland preservation. There has been no activity related to farmland preservation on the Federal side of the budget except for the passing of the new Farm Bill.

- b. Roth** – The Roth property is very close to closing, possibly by the end of the month. This has been a long two-year process. The funds to preserve this property are WEGE funds and Federal funds.
- c. ACEP** – Stacy has not seen or heard of any announcement from ACEP regarding if funds will be made available for use this year. The board has decided to move forward with the preservation of the Hefferan farm and the Sieracki farm.

Stacy informed the board that after many conversations with the Hefferan farm owners, the Hefferan's have decided not to move forward with the preservation of their property. There was discussion among the group about the different townships that have money set aside in their budgets to put towards farmland preservation. Grattan and Vergennes are two such townships.

Gretchen asked about how the board connects with the farmers to advertise the farmland preservation program. Stacy explained about sending out postcard announcements to landowners with 20 acres of land to announce a new application cycle and when new applications will be accepted. After the applications have been received, old and new, then they are put through the selection criteria and the board selects the farms that they

would like to try to preserve that coming year. Dennis explained about the four regions in Kent County and about the funding.

Gretchen then explained to the board members what her job entails at the Land Conservancy.

If the ACEP does announce an open application cycle, the Ag. Preservation board may need to schedule a special meeting before the next scheduled meeting in June.

**Approval of 2019 Selection Criteria** – Russ made a motion to accept the 2019 Selection Criteria and Ed seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The application dates will be May 1-July 31, 2019 for the 2019 cycle. Suzie made a motion to accept the dates and Ed seconded the motion. The motion passed.

It was decided to have a Landowners Meeting before the 2019 Application Cycle opened on May 1. There will be a meeting at the Lowell Township Hall on Thursday, April 25 from 6:00-8:00 pm. Carl Blough will check the date with the Township Hall to make sure the hall is available that day and time.

Stacy decided that the postcards should be mailed out by the first week in April to announce the 2019 application cycle.

Dennis talked about the Celebrate Kent Farms flyer that was handed out to the board members. Stacy will be making a presentation at this gathering regarding the preservation of farm land. The date is Wednesday, April 24 from 6:00-8:00 pm at The Bluff Banquet Center on 28<sup>th</sup> Street SE. Tickets are \$25.00 each and can be purchased online at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) “Celebrate Kent Farms”

**VIII. Public Comment** – Carl Blough commented that the oil & mineral rights on farms have been released because no farm has received a second payment, so the contracts are no longer in affect. Carl also offered to talk to the township officials if the board needed any help in getting the word out about farmland preservation.

**IX. Adjournment** – Suzie made a motion to close the meeting at 12:54 p.m., Ed seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Next meeting date is Wednesday, June 5, 2019, at 11:30 AM at  
the Kent County MSU Extension Office.