

Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board

October 7, 2015

Kent/MSU Extension

11:30 AM

Members Present: Carl Blough (Ag Interest), Dennis Heffron (Ag Interest), Suzie Reinbold (Real Estate Interest) and Michele Van Houten (Conservation Interest)

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

Members/Staff Absent: Candace Chivis (County Commissioner), Ed Robinette (Township Interest), Russ Slater (Ag Interest) and Mary Swanson (Administrator's Office)

Public Present:

Meeting began at 11:39 a.m.

- I. Welcome and Call to Order** – Dennis Heffron
- II. Public Comment** - None
- III. Review Agenda and Declaration of Any Possible Conflict of Interest** - None
- IV. Review and Adoption of September 2, 2015 Minutes** – *Michele motioned to approve with changes and Carl seconded. Motion passed.*
- V. Old Business**
 - a. 2014 FRPP applications – update Hall, Poulias
Hall – no update
Poulias – There will be a site visit next week. The paperwork will go to the Feds and hoping for a closing date for the end of the month. Discussion followed as to why the Poulias property has been such a long and drawn out process. There is a possibility that the Osbournes (Poulias' neighbors) are interested in filling out an application for the program.
 - b. 2013 FRPP Status – Frost and Vanoeffelen – closed/completed
 - c. 2015 Application Cycle – Malone
A new appraiser was found to appraise the remaining 56 acre parcel.
 - d. 2015 Application Cycle
 - i. Final approval of ranking
Discussion took place over the ranking of the applicants and choosing which pieces of land to try to preserve with the funds available. The

Bradford property continues to be ranked very high. They are located in the Sparta area and American Farm Trust Fund dollars could be used to fund the smaller parcels (39 acres). It was suggested that American Farm Trust Fund money could be used for the Bradford property.

The Giles Hefferan property is a new application that has 76 acres and is located in Cannon Township. Also, the Patrick Farrell property is new and is in Ada Township. This township may have funding possibilities. Denny said that he would like to attend the township meeting when these farms are on the agenda for discussion. The Stein Farm property may be a possibility to preserve because all of the neighbors' property surrounding the farm has already been preserved. *Michele made a motion to approve/accept the scores and rankings of the farms for 2015 and Carl seconded, motion carried.*

ii. Final approval of farms for 2016

The committee decided to move ahead and get appraisals on the Giles Hefferan and Farrell property. *Michele made a motion to check for oil & gas leases on the property titles before paying for an appraisal. Denny seconded and the motion carried.*

The consensus of the committee was that it would be a challenge to get the Bradford property funded and that Sparta Township should be asked to contribute dollars towards this preservation. *Suzie made a motion that the committee use American Farm Trust Funds to preserve Malone and Bradford properties and then apply for federal funding for the Hefferan, Farrell and Momber properties. Michele seconded and the motion carried.*

It was suggested that the Freye Foundation be contacted and check into the availability of any funding from them for this next group of properties

VI. New Business

Stacy said that she had a good meeting/conference call with Kali from Representative Stabenow's office and others from around the state regarding the problems/challenges that everyone seems to be having with the new Farm Bill procedures and getting the paperwork completed in a timely fashion. Some of the other concerns that people are having with the system include: mineral rights, trusts for easements and the whole process being time consuming.

In October there will be face-to-face meeting to discuss the new Farm Bill and the challenges. In November these concerns will be brought to the Ag Committee.

Denny mentioned how nice it is to work with Jeff Henrickson in the Kent County Department of Equalization. Jeff does a great job with processing all the paperwork for these properties. Nathan said that he would pass that compliment on to Jeff.

Regarding the October 14 celebration at the Hall Farm, invites have been sent out to township, city and county officials. It was suggested that the list of invitees include the State Representatives from the districts of the three preserved farms. It was decided that in place of tables and chairs that there just be bales of hays set out for people to sit on. Ed Robinette has graciously decided to donate cider and donuts for the event and Stacy will pick up some coffee from Tim Horton's also.

Currently there are only about 10 people who have RSVP'd. Hopefully more will come in before the event, but a good turnout would probably be around 15-25 people in attendance. Discussion followed regarding what types of media to contact to have coverage of the farm preservation story.

VII. Other - none

VIII. Public Comment - none

IX. Adjournment at 12:26 p.m.

Suzie motioned to adjourn and Carl seconded, motion carried.

Next Meeting November 4, 2015 at 11:30 a.m. at Kent/MSU Extension.