

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 13, 2011 MEETING**

The January 13, 2011 meeting of the Open Space Preservation Advisory Board was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, MI.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Rick Steketee, Mischelle Sytsma, Jeff VandenBerge, Randy VanDragt

ABSENT: Randy Damstra, Elise Roe

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Ferro, Planning Director
Mark Fitzpatrick, Parks Director

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consent, with addition of approval of meeting schedule for FY 2011-12.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 4, 2010 AND DECEMBER 9, 2010 MEETINGS

It was moved by VanDragt, seconded by Ladd, to approve the November 4, 2010 meeting minutes, subject to one grammatical correction.

Motion passed unanimously.

Steketee joined the meeting at this time.

It was moved by VandenBerge, seconded by Steketee, to approve the minutes of the December 9 meeting as presented.

Motion approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF FISCAL YEAR 2011-12 MEETING SCHEDULE.

Ferro distributed a proposed meeting schedule for the next fiscal year, noting that all meeting dates were on the second Thursday of the month.

It was moved by VanDragt, seconded by VandenBerge, to approve the proposed meeting schedule.

Motion passed unanimously.

STATUS OF PROJECTS

a. Raymond Property – 180 Pettis Ave. NE

Ferro reported he has no new information on this property. He does not know whether a neighboring property owner has purchased the property. VandenBerge stated that he recently saw the neighbor, who indicated they were continuing purchase discussions with the Raymond family.

b. Gilmore Property on Thornapple River

Ferro reported that he recently spoke to Rick Rankin about obtaining the mortgage release on the property. Rankin stated that John Gilmore recently returned from an out-of-country trip, and that Rankin was leaving this weekend for several weeks in Florida.

c. Cooper Property on Bailey Dr.

Ferro reported that he spoke with Dick Cooper prior to the holidays, to inform him of the extension of Federal tax benefits for conservation easement donations through the end of 2011. Cooper confirmed that he had met with his accountant before he left for the winter, but had not yet met with his attorney. Ferro stated he followed up the phone conversation by mailing Coopers a copy of the Land Trust Alliance brochure explaining the extended provisions of Federal tax law.

d. Bottrall Property at 6230 Grand River Dr. NE

Ferro reported he has no new information on this property, and that he does not know if it is still under contract to be purchased.

Ladd stated we should be following up on this, and he would like to get on the property. Ferro was asked to confirm whether the property is still available, and arrange site visits to the property if it is still on the market.

Crosby brought up a second vacant property that is on the market that is near the Bottrall property, and the fact that it also has substantial wetland conditions. It was suggested that this property might also be considered for acquisition.

NEW PROPERTIES FOR CONSIDERATION:

a. Bielema Property on East Fulton St.

Ferro reported the Township was approached by John Postma, on behalf of the Bielema family, as to whether the Township would be interested in acquiring any of the Fulton St. properties owned by the Bielemas. Ferro referred to aerial photo/property maps showing the locations of the various properties in question, including aerial photography from both 2003 and 2009, a comparison of which identifies areas where extensive clearing was conducted to create pasture. Crosby provided background information regarding the Township's interest in the property, and the fact that the Township was considering making an offer on the 59 acre property near the MDOT highway rest area several years ago when it was on the market, and Bielemas purchased the site. Ferro stated the owners have granted permission to the Township for access to the property, subject to communication as to when we would like to visit.

Concern was expressed by several members regarding the disturbance to the natural features of the properties entailed in the conversion of portions of the property from woodland to cattle grazing land.

VanDragt stated he did not believe we had sufficient information to make any conclusions about the natural value remaining on the property, and that an assessment of the sites should be conducted, to identify the natural attributes that may still exist on the properties.

The consensus of the Board was that an assessment of the property should be conducted in the spring.

b. Potential 2.3 Acre Acquisition from Paul Barron on Bailey Dr.

Ferro reported on Paul Barron's inquiry as to whether the Township would be interested in purchasing about 2 acres of land adjacent to the Township's trail on the east-west portion of Bailey Drive, west of McCabe Ave.

The consensus of the Board was that purchase of the site for open space preservation purposes was not warranted, and that any acquisition should be considered for park and trail rest area purposes by the Parks Committee and/or Trail Committee.

2011 PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Fitzpatrick presented the draft goals, objectives and potential action strategies drafted for the update of the 2011 Plan, and invited Board input on the document. He noted that the public input event held on January 11 was attended by only 3 people, due in part to snowy weather conditions that evening.

Board members offered several suggestions for revisions/additions to the document.

Ladd expressed some concern that the wording regarding use of parks and land preservation funds not open the door to use of funding designated for land preservation for park purposes. In discussion, it was noted that there is often not a clear distinction between park land and open space land, and one acquisition may possibly serve both purposes. Roselle Park was suggested by Ferro as an example of this.

PROPOSAL FROM LAND CONSERVANCY OF WEST MICHIGAN FOR CONTRACT SERVICES ON CONSERVATION EASEMENT DRAFTING

Ferro distributed copies of the proposal he received today from the Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM), for providing services to the Township in negotiating and drafting conservation easements. Ferro stated that the proposal was invited based on a recognition that the Township does not have extensive expertise on easement drafting, and that the LCWM is a logical alternative for addressing this need.

Ferro noted that the Conservancy's services would be provided on an hourly basis, with an estimate of 33 hours per easement, at a cost of about \$1,500. Ferro also noted that it needs to be recognized that there may be situations in which costs for easement drafting services would be incurred for projects that do not come to fruition due to property owners deciding not to proceed.

Ferro stated that the Board's input on this was needed at this time, as budgets for the coming year are currently being prepared.

In discussion, the consensus of the Board was that we should budget funding for use of the LCWM's services.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to recommend that funding be budgeted in the amount of \$5,000 for contracted services from the Land Conservancy, and that a master agreement with the Land Conservancy for providing these services be prepared and entered into.

Motion passed by 5-0 vote, with Ladd and VandenBerge abstaining, based on their involvement in the Land Conservancy Board.

MARKETING/PROMOTION

- a. Forest Hills Community Expo – Saturday, March 19, 2011, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Crosby asked members to place this event on their calendars, and that it would be discussed at the February meeting.

- b. Extension of Enhanced Federal Tax Benefit for Conservation Easement Donations- Options for Promotion

Crosby suggested that the Land Trust Alliance brochure explaining Federal tax benefits for donated easements be placed on the Township web site, that information be put in the Adaview newsletter, and

that a letter be mailed to targeted property owners with this information. She requested that a draft letter be prepared for discussion at the February meeting.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS/REPORTS

Crosby reported on the success of the autumn olive removal partnership with Goodwillie Environmental School last fall.

VandenBerge asked whether Ferro had any information about the status of the VanderWarf property. Ferro stated he did not but would contact the VanderWarfs' real estate agent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

III. Adjournment

It was noted that we have a joint meeting with the Parks Committee next Thursday, January 20, at 4:00 p.m., and that the February meeting is on February 10.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf