

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 14, 2008 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m., by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Randy VanDragt, Mischelle Sytsma

ABSENT: Greg Forbes, Matt Nygren, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe

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

PUBLIC PRESENT: Julie Stoneman, Executive Director, Land Conservancy of West Michigan
Roger Sabine, Kent County Parks Director

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 10, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

It was moved by Sytsma,, seconded by Ladd, to approve the minutes of the January 10 meeting.

LOCAL MATCH FUNDING REQUEST FOR CHIEF HAZY CLOUD PARK EXPANSION LAND ACQUISITION

Roger Sabine, Director, Kent County Parks, addressed the Advisory Board regarding the County's efforts to secure matching funds to offset the County's cost of acquiring land for expansion of Chief Hazy Cloud Park on Pettis Ave. Sabine stated the County closed on the acquisition in January, with most of the funding coming from DNR grant funds. The County is seeking to cover a portion of its \$280,000 in local matching funds by partnering with other organizations. By defraying as much of their local match as possible, the County hopes to be able to acquire additional land between Pettis Ave. and the Grand River, including two residential properties adjacent to the land just acquired, as well as land owned by Rieth Riley Construction Co. to the northwest.

Sabine indicated that so far, the County has raised \$150,000 of the \$280,000 goal.

Julie Stoneman, Land Conservancy of West Michigan, noted that an additional \$25,000 has been obtained by ~~them~~ the Conservancy from another donor. Julie expressed the Land Conservancy's support for the County's request, and its importance to the goal of acquiring additional open space along the Grand River corridor in the future. Julie also mentioned the "Ada Fund" that is held at the Land Conservancy, which has approximately a \$40,000 balance, as a possible source of matching funds.

Sabine stated that in other cases where they have partnered with local townships, the township commitment has been in the range of \$100,000 sometimes in one payment, and sometimes spread over several years.

Crosby asked whether the County would be looking for future partnership and financial participation from the Township on future land acquisitions in the area. Roger indicated that this would be the case.

Ferro stated that in considering the County's request, there were several things for the Advisory Board to consider, including the available balance in the open space preservation account, whether there are any other commitments or priorities for the available funds that need to be considered, and whether there should be a site visit and evaluation of the property against our site rating criteria completed. Ferro asked Sabine whether the County had any improvement plans for the recently-acquired property.

Sabine stated that the existing facilities at Chief Hazy Cloud Park are minimal, at best. The County's goal would be to shift the facilities and focus of activity at the park further to the west to the newly-acquired land, as shown on the concept plan which accompanied his letter to the Township.

Sytsma stated that she agreed with the points raised by Ferro, and that a site evaluation should be completed. She also asked whether this property was evaluated in our past Natural Features inventory work.

VanDragt stated that the property was looked at in the first natural features inventory that was conducted in the 1990's by Calvin College. It was noted that the property was not given a detailed inventory in the most recent inventory that was conducted, due to lack of property owner permission for access. VanDragt stated that he had no doubt that the property would score highly on our site ranking criteria, but he agrees we should perform the evaluation.

Ladd asked whether Sabine has information on the property that he can share with us. Sabine indicated he did have such information, including the material submitted with the grant application to the State. Sabine also mentioned that the grant application scored very highly against the DNR's grant selection criteria, two years in a row. Ferro also noted that the Township has wetland boundary mapping and floodplain mapping for the site.

Crosby stated there appears to be a consensus that we should follow our normal site evaluation process with regard to the request., and that additional information regarding the characteristics of the property should be collected and presented to the Advisory Board.

REVIEW OF DRAFT CONSERVATION EASEMENT FOR CARL CREEK PROPERTY

Ferro reviewed the status of the conservation easement document for the Carl Creek property, and the discussions between our legal counsel and April Scholtz regarding the language concerning the Land Conservancy having the authority to compel the Township to correct any easement violations by third parties. Ferro stated that in his most recent communication with the attorney late yesterday, they have come to agreement on the language, and a final draft should be ready soon. April Scholtz did indicate that she wished to consult with the Conservancy's legal advisor.

STATUS OF 383 PETTIS AVE. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

Ferro stated there has been not change in the status of this property. We are still waiting for lenders to agree to the purchase price. An extension for several months on the purchase agreement has been signed.

GILMORE/MDOT PROPERTY ON FORMER THORNAPPLE RIVER – STATUS OF TITLE

Ferro reported that John Gilmore has agreed to cover the Township's costs for obtaining clear title to the property that was quit claim deeded to us by Gilmore, and we have received written confirmation from Lois Poppen as to the amount she is asking. Ferro stated he was expecting a check from Mr. Gilmore to arrive soon.

7980 FULTON ST. PROPERTY – STATUS OF PRIVATE FUND-RAISING

Crosby reported on the status of the private fund-raising effort to assist the Township in offsetting the cost of purchasing the property at 7980 East Fulton St. She stated that the group has made progress, but will probably fall short of the \$110,000 goal. The group will complete raising of all of the match toward a matching grant that has been offered.

MARKETING/PROMOTION/STEWARDSHIP

Mark Fitzpatrick reported on dates for upcoming land stewardship projects, including a County-wide garlic mustard pull, now scheduled for May 3, and an April 19 Conservation Organization Expo at the Wittenbach Center in Lowell.

Mark also reviewed data we have received concerning number of properties having the National Wildlife Federation habitat certification, organized by zip code. It was noted that we will need more detailed address information to verify those that are located in Ada Township, since zip code boundaries do not coincide with Township boundaries.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf