

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 8, 2007 MEETING**

Draft

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, Greg Forbes, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe,
Randy VanDragt

ABSENT: Matt Nygren, Mischelle Sytsma

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Jim Ferro

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Moved by Ladd, seconded by Roberts, to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2007 meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

STATUS OF PROPERTIES OF INTEREST:

383 Pettis Ave. Property:

Haga reported he had contacted Vern Ehler's office regarding the status of the "Pre-Disaster Mitigation" grant funding. The information from Ehlers' FEMA contact is that the PDM grants have been delayed, and there is no information available on when they will be released.

MDOT Property on Fulton St.:

Ferro reported that a title insurance commitment has been ordered, with a nominal value specified.

851 Thornapple River Dr. Property:

Haga reported he had talked to the realtor with the listing on the 851 Thornapple River Dr. property this morning, and expressed interest in meeting with the owner. The realtor stated she felt it would be a waste of time to meet unless we can come close to the owner's asking price.

Ladd suggested making an offer no greater than the estimated market value. As a member of the local Realtors Association, he would act as the realtor presenting the offer, and would take no commission. VanDragt asked whether we have researched whether the Township would have river access if the Township owned the property. If we did not have access, the property would be of much less interest to us.

Haga was asked to obtain legal input regarding the Township's ability to provide limited public access to the river, strictly for non-motorized watercraft, if it owned the property. It was also suggested that an assessment of the property using the open space rating criteria should be made.

VanDragt suggested that an offer slightly above, say 5% above, the assessed value would show our good intentions and might be more favorably accepted.

After additional discussion, it was moved by Forbes, seconded by Roe, that we propose an offer up to 5% above the assessor's estimate of the market value of the property, with the provision that only the listing broker would receive the customary commission.

Haga suggested adding a condition that the offer would be contingent on an appraisal acceptable to the Township. This suggested condition was accepted by Forbes and Roe.

Motion passed by 5-1 vote, with Ladd abstaining.

Jakeway Property:

Ferro reported on a conversation he had with one of Joe Jakeway's sons, John. Mr. Jakeway indicated they would be willing to consider a written offer from the Township for a conservation easement, and that the family would want market value for the property.

Other Properties of Interest:

Ferro reported on a phone conversation with William Hart, in which he mentioned to Mr. Hart the new State and Federal tax incentives available for conservation easement donations.. Mr. Hart has had some health problems. He mentioned that he has a number of children that would need to be consulted regarding the property.

Ferro also mentioned the recent sale of the Despres property. Elise Roe was asked to contact a friend who knows the new owner. Ferro noted that the new owner plans to plant orchard trees on the property, and has no plans for development.

STATUS OF NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY:

VanDragt circulated a near-final draft of the Natural Features Inventory report, and offered several observations regarding the results of the project: He noted that compared to Vergennes Township, we had a lower percentage of owners contacted who permitted access to their property for the inventory. Seventeen properties received in-depth, "Phase 2" inventories. The properties surveyed covered a broad range of plant community types. The plant species recorded in the inventory included 10 species that are listed by the State either as "species of special concern" or "threatened or endangered." The endangered species recorded was the American Chestnut. There were also 25 native species identified that were "new records" for Kent County, meaning this is the first instance of their having been identified in Kent County. VanDragt also noted that 23 of the non-native species identified in the inventory were also records for Kent County.

VanDragt stated that the final, polished report will be available in a couple of weeks.

In discussion, Ladd encouraged getting the Inventory integrated into the Master Plan as a tool that can be used to influence development decisions in the Township. Ferro stated that he believed that the completed inventory can be used during the development review process to influence site design on new development.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS:

Crosby mentioned the upcoming Stewardship Network webcast on the Internet, and the ability to subscribe to e-mail announcements on future similar events.

She also mentioned the upcoming photography contest highlighting natural features and open space in 6 townships in eastern Kent County.

Correspondence from Jamie Ladd suggesting we undertake a Champion Tree Contest with Vergennes Township was reviewed. VanDragt pointed out that Champion tree records are species-specific, and that tree height is typically measured at 4-1/2 feet above grade. Species suggested for inclusion in a contest included Silver Maple, American Beech, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, White Oak and Basswood.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk

rs:jf