

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 8, 2012 MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Open Space Preservation Advisory Board was held on Thursday, March 8, 2012. The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby at the Ada Township Offices, 7330 Thornapple River Dr., Ada, MI.

PRESENT: Dan Bergman, Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Paul Leblanc, Elise Roe, Rick Steketee, Jeff VandenBerge

ABSENT: Randy Damstra, Jamie Ladd

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

PUBLIC PRESENT: Wayne Harrall, Kent County Road Commission

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2012 MEETING

It was moved by Leblanc, seconded by Steketee, to approve the February 9 minutes as presented.

Motion passed unanimously.

RACINE PROPERTY AT 4980 KNAPP ST.

Ferro reported that no response to the Township's verbal offer on the property has been received, and that the property is now listed on the MLS for sale, at an asking price of \$94,900. Ferro also reported on a phone conversation with the Realtor just prior to this meeting.

Wayne Harrall, Kent County Road Commission, was present to discuss the Road Commission's proposed cost sharing formula for their participation in the cost of acquiring the property, removal of the home and underground fuel tanks and re-vegetation of the site.

Harrall was asked whether the Road Commission has a plan for intersection improvements if the property is acquired.

Harrall stated that the Road Commission has submitted a grant application for Federal transportation "safety" funding that would pay for 80% of the cost of adding a right-turn lane from northbound Grand River Dr. to eastbound Knapp St. They expect a response on whether the grant will be awarded by late April or early May. Harrall stated that the intersection widening project could be completed without acquiring the entire Racine property or removing the house, but that the right turn lane radius would encroach into the corner of the property by 5-10 feet. Harrall added it might also be possible to shift the northbound road alignment slightly west to avoid the encroachment.

Harrall was also asked if the property is acquired, would the Road Commission commit to removal of the home in the near future.

Harrall stated the Road Commission would complete the demolition of the home soon after the property is acquired.

Following discussion, it was moved by Haga, seconded by Roe, to recommend that the proposed cost-sharing formula as contained in the Road Commission's January 25, 2012 letter to Ada Township be approved.

Motion passed unanimously.

The consensus of the Advisory Board was that the Township should wait for a counter-proposal from the property owner.

TITLE INSURANCE ON GILMORE PROPERTY

Ferro reported the title insurance policy on the property has been paid for.

CARL CREEK HEADWATERS PROTECTION

Haga reported he has not yet been successful in contacting Rob Hunter at Amway regarding the possibility of a conservation easement being placed on Amway's Spaulding Ave property.

GENE AND TUBIE GILMORE PROPERTY CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Ferro updated the Board on the conservation easement that has been donated by the Gilmores to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, and the Gilmore's interest in also donating a non-motorized trail easement to Ada Township, subject to a life estate.

It was noted that these easements advance the Township's goal of open space preservation along the Grand River corridor.

RECENT SALES OF PROPERTIES OF INTEREST

Ferro updated the Board on recent sales of properties that have been of interest to the Advisory Board in the past as candidates for permanent open space preservation, including property around Chase Lake, and the VanderWarf family properties on Honey Creek Ave.

COOPER PROPERTY ON BAILEY DRIVE

Ferro provided an overview on the status of discussions with Dick and Shirley Cooper regarding a possible conservation easement on their property. Ferro stated that the Coopers had retained a Forester to prepare a Forest Stewardship Management Plan for the property, prior to continuing discussions with the Township.

Ferro stated he would contact the Coopers about continuing our discussions this year.

DISCUSSION OF MARKETING/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Crosby encouraged members to give thought to how the Advisory Board can educate property owners regarding stewardship of natural land and promote the Township's open space preservation goals. Leblanc offered to serve with Crosby and Roe on a Marketing subcommittee to work on this task.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS/REPORTS

Alternative Sign Designs for Vos Property:

Ferro presented design options for a site identification sign for the open space preserve at 6195 East Fulton St., and requested feedback from members on the size and shape of the sign and on the text message. Feedback was provided for Ferro to use in refining a design.

Billboard on Gilmore Property at 7586 E. Fulton St.:

Ferro requested feedback from the Advisory Board on an offer from John Gilmore to permanently extinguish his billboard rights on his property at 7586 East Fulton St., in return for \$50,000 in compensation from the Township. Ferro pointed out that the Township should obtain legal input as to whether purchase of billboard rights would qualify as a lawful use of open space preservation funds. He noted that such a purchase could be

structured as a permanent scenic easement on the property, which would be enforceable by the Township, and which would constitute acquiring an "interest in land," which he believes would fall within the allowable use of the open space preservation funds. The consensus of the Board was to not consider this offer.

Upcoming Open Space Stewardship Dates:

Fitzpatrick noted that volunteer stewardship outings have been scheduled for 9:30 a.m. to noon on April 26 and May 10.

Forest Hills Community Expo- March 17, 2012

Crosby stated that volunteers are needed for booth-sitting duties at the Township's booth during the Forest Hills Community Expo, scheduled for 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 17.

Ferro indicated he would email a sign up list for shifts to Board members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton
Township Clerk
RS: jf