

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE APRIL 14, 2011 MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Open Space Preservation Advisory Board was held on Thursday, April 14, 2011. 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: Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Elise Roe, Mischelle Sytsma, Jeff VandenBerge (at 4:15 p.m.), Randy VanDragt

ABSENT: Randy Damstra, Jamie Ladd, Rick Steketee

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

PUBLIC PRESENT: 2

APPROVAL OF MARCH 10, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by VanDragt, to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2011 meeting as presented. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

AMENDMENT OF AGENDA

Crosby stated she wished to add to the agenda setting a date for a joint meeting with the Planning Commission, to discuss the riparian protection regulations.

STATUS OF PROJECTS

a. Bottrall Property Acquisition

Ferro reported that the closing on the Bottrall property took place last week.

b. Cooper Property on Bailey Dr.

Ferro reported that the Coopers just returned home this week. He stated he has spoken to Dick Cooper about continuing our discussions from last fall, and Dick stated he will be in touch with us soon.

(VandenBerge arrived at the meeting at this time).

c. VanderBoon Property at 1780 Grand River Dr.

Ferro reported a meeting that had been scheduled with Mr. VanderBoon was postponed to next week.

d. Former Raymond Property

Ferro reported the potential acquisition of a portion of the property formerly owned by the Raymond family by a conservation buyer has not materialized.

e. Gilmore Property Donation, Need for Mortgage Release

Ferro reported he left a voice message with Rick Rankin regarding the mortgage release on the Gilmore property, and has not heard back from him.

f. Schedule Site Visits to Bielema Property

The consensus of the Board was for Ferro to arrange site visits for members to the Bielema property in late-April – early-May.

CONSIDERATION OF VOS PROPERTY AT 6195 FULTON ST.

Ferro summarized the results of the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, and the consultant's finding that the importation of significant amounts of fill onto nearly 2 acres of the site in the 1970's is a "recognized environmental condition" meriting further investigation, through some soil sampling and testing for contaminants. Ferro stated that the consultant has submitted a proposal for completing the recommended "Phase II" investigation, at a cost range from \$5,615 to \$7,815, depending on the findings from the soil testing.

Ferro also pointed out the presence of the irrigation water withdrawal and pumping system that is present on the southern end of the site adjacent to Carl Creek. While this does not pose any environmental contamination concerns, it is a significant aesthetic and visual distraction on the site.

Ferro stated that direction is needed from the Advisory Board on whether we should proceed with the Phase 2 environmental investigation, and that we should only proceed with this work and expense if we are fairly certain we wish to acquire the site. Ferro suggested that the Advisory Board consider whether the conditions we are currently aware of – the significant amounts of fill that were imported to the site, and the water withdrawal and pumping system adjacent to the creek, would dissuade us from purchasing the site.

Ferro referenced photos he has taken showing the extent of the water withdrawal and pumping system, and small areas of exposed concrete rubble on the site.

Ferro added that he has contacted a member of the condo association Board from the Country Homes of Ada, as well as the management company that provides services to the condominium, as to whether they would consider abandoning the use of the creek for irrigation water, and obtain another source of water – either a private well or connection to the public water system. Ferro also referenced written comments submitted by Advisory Board member Ladd regarding dealing with the irrigation water system.

In discussion, VanDragt stated he does not believe we should abandon the Vos acquisition at this point. Haga stated he also believes we should stick with the project at this point. With regard to Ladd's suggestion of the condo association connecting to public water, he noted that the connection permit fee would range from about \$3,300 to \$10,400, depending on meter size, and that there would be additional costs to the property owner for connection piping to the irrigation system. Haga also noted that the water system rate rules do not allow for a negotiated rate discount.

Roe stated she was very concerned with the visual impact that the irrigation system has on the property, and that she would like to see us pursue efforts to get it removed from the property.

VandenBerge stated he is concerned with the costs of the additional environmental investigation needed, in relation to the purchase price. He suggested that it should be the seller's responsibility to give us a "clean bill of health" on the property.

Haga noted he had discussed with Gary Vos whether he would consider sharing in the cost of the Phase 2 environmental investigation, and that he had declined. Gary did indicate he would be willing to extend our option agreement at no additional cost, in order to allow us additional time to complete our site investigation.

Sytsma agreed with VandenBerge's concern. Sytsma pointed out that there would be significant amount of restoration work needed on the property. She asked VanDragt whether Calvin students could use the Vos site as a project site. VanDragt noted that they were currently committed to the Plaster Creek corridor for student projects, but that they could be a source of volunteers.

Park Director Fitzpatrick commented that the water withdrawal system and equipment are highly disruptive to the creek corridor, and that we should pursue having it removed, if possible. He noted that efforts to remove all of the fill and concrete rubble on the site would be difficult and disruptive in themselves. He expressed concern with the potential leaching of environmental contaminants into the creek, and the possible costs of any remediation efforts needed.

Ferro pointed out that the reason for the Township conducting environmental due diligence was to protect the Township against financial liability for costs of cleanup. He stated that if our investigation finds contamination, the State is responsible for identifying and pursuing any responsible parties, and we would be protected from liability.

Ferro stated that the decision needed at this point was whether to go ahead with the Phase 2 investigation, and whether to request an extension of the purchase option from the owner.

Roe stated she believed we should pursue options for removing the irrigation system, prior to committing to the Phase 2 expense. Sytsma and VanDragt concurred with this.

Following discussion, it was moved by Haga, seconded by Roe, to recommend that the Township request an extension of 90 days on the purchase option with Gary Vos.

Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gwen Beversluis, resident of 6264 Grand River Dr., adjacent to the Bottrall property, commented that the Bottrall family burned household trash on the property for 50-60 years, disposed of used motor oil, and were poor stewards of the land in general. Beversluis also stated that the previous owner, Robert Bottrall Sr., who used to operate the Ada dump, used the site for disposal of refuse from his trash collection business, after the Ada dump closed, and that trash was dumped on both the Bottrall property and the Vos property.

With regard to the irrigation pumping system on the Vos property, Beversluis suggested excluding this area from the land we purchase from Vos.

MARKETING/PROMOTION

Crosby suggested that the mailing to property owners that has been discussed in the past be postponed until after our deliberations regarding the Vos and Bottrall properties are complete.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS/REPORTS

Optional locations for a memorial tree or bench in Bette Roberts' name were discussed. Fitzpatrick suggested the possibility of a bench on the Woodrick Memorial Deck at Roselle Park as a possibility.

The planned "Pulling Together" stewardship activities on May 14, 10:00 a.m. at Ada Park and Seidman Park to pull garlic mustard were discussed. Crosby noted that she and Ferro would be coordinating efforts with Kent County Parks at Seidman Park.

May 12 at 4:00 p.m. was tentatively set for a joint meeting with the Planning Commission, to discuss the riparian protection regulations. Ferro stated he would get this communicated to the Planning Commission at their meeting next Tuesday.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton
Township Clerk
RS: jf