

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MAY 8, 2008 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:55 p.m., by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, Greg Forbes, George Haga,, Matt Nygren, Elise Roe, Rick Steketee, Mischelle Sytsma, Randy VanDragt

ABSENT: Jamie Ladd

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Jim Ferro
Parks Director Mark Fitzpatrick

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER:

Crosby welcomed newly-appointed Board member Rick Steketee, and thanked him for his efforts on the Carl Creek property acquisition..

APPROVAL OF APRIL 10, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

It was moved by Sytsma,, seconded by VanDragt, to approve the minutes of the April 10 meeting, as presented.

Motion passed unanimously.

STATUS OF PROJECTS

Conservation Easement for Carl Creek Property

Ferro distributed copies of the final draft of the conservation easement for the Carl Creek property, along with the Baseline Documentation document prepared by the Land Conservancy. The document is now ready for signing and recording.

There was a consensus that the easement document should be sent to all of the property owners who made donations to the acquisition project., with an explanation of its significant provisions.

Crosby stated that the surveyors have placed additional property boundary identification stakes on the site, so that we can now install permanent property boundary markers.

A volunteer effort to complete placement of property owner boundary stakes and easement signs was scheduled for Tuesday, May 13, at 5:00 p.m., starting at Rick Steketee's residence.

Confirmed and potential encroachments across the property boundary were discussed. Ferro reported that the surveyor's staking confirmed that the fire pit on the Schalton property is located on the Township side of the boundary. There is also some tree waste and a Christmas tree that have been deposited very close to or over the property boundary, at the west end of the property. There is also a property corner that is at the very edge of a neighbor's daffodil bed and yard.

Ferro stated he has been contacted by Ms. Schalton, and she does not wish to re-locate the fire pit, either now or at an agreed-upon future date. Ferro stated he had suggested the possibility of a written agreement that would establish a future time for removal of the fire pit, and Ms. Schalton was not interested in that alternative, as she views the fire pit area as a selling point for her home.

Ferro distributed copies of a photograph from last October showing the fire pit area. He noted that it is not maintained as manicured lawn, but Ms. Schalon stated she does place some wood chips in the area, trims vegetation and has planted some ferns..

Haga expressed concern that if the Township takes no action to document its ownership of the property there may be a risk of the Township losing the property through “adverse possession.”

The consensus of the group was that something should be done, but postponed any decision on requesting removal of the fire pit, until members have had an opportunity to visit the site, and look at the options for re-location.

383 Pettis Ave. Property Acquisition

Ferro reported that the purchase agreement for the property expired on April 30, and that a decision was made to not renew the agreement, due to the amount of time that has transpired since the purchase price was negotiated, and the changes that have occurred in the real estate market within the last year. This was done in consultation with the State grant funding agency representatives, who agreed this was a prudent action.

Haga reported he has asked the Township Assessor to conduct a new market value analysis for the property, and once it is completed we can re-assess our offer.

Gilmore/MDOT Property on former Thornapple River – Status of Title

Ferro reported that this week he provided Rick Rankin with the legal description for the property, so that Rick could prepare the needed mortgage release. He hopes to have that completed soon.

Crosby suggested they discuss Item 6.a. on the agenda at this time.

Ferro distributed a map showing all of the Township-owned property in the vicinity of the confluence of the Grand and Thornapple rivers. He noted that it has been a couple of years since we have spoken to the Fase and Fryover families to express our interest in acquiring property from them, to add to the protected and publicly-accessible land along the river corridor.

Ferro and Haga were requested to contact these property owners about our continued interest in acquiring land from them.

Site Evaluation and Potential Funding Contribution for Chief Hazy Cloud Park Expansion Property

Ferro, Forbes and VanDragt reported on the results of their site visits to the property and evaluation against our site acquisition criteria. Point system ratings ranged from 50 to 60, out of 80 points possible. It was noted that there has been significant logging on the property, and there are old dump sites on the property, including tires. Ferro noted that most of the dump areas appeared to be inert material. It was noted that if we had more information regarding any environmental assessment that may have been done by the County, the site rating on the environmental conditions criterion might increase.

Forbes stated that although we understand the merits of this purchase, based on our established priorities, there may be more value in using our funds toward future purchases by the County of the two residential in-holdings adjacent to the property, or the Rieth Riley property, rather than being applied to a purchase that has already been completed.

There was discussion about the amount of funding the County is seeking. Ferro noted that the February minutes indicate that, as reported by Roger Sabine, the County has already raised \$150,000 of its

\$280,000 goal, and the Land Conservancy has obtained an additional pledge of \$25,000, leaving \$105,000 to be raised. Ferro stated that Sabine also told us that other partnerships with Township's on County purchases have been in the \$100,000 range, either in one payment or over several years.

VanDragt stated he believes it is important to encourage the County to continue its initiative of acquiring additional riverfront open space, and if we can use our funds as an inducement, we will be that much ahead.

Haga stated he would contact Roger Sabine to obtain an update on the status of discussions with the adjacent property owners regarding acquisition.

VanDragt suggested that a map of the entire river corridor that provides an overall view of lands already protected be prepared, to aid in identifying other high priority candidates.

Ferro stated this could be provided by the next meeting.

MARKETING/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

United Growth Land Preservation Guide:

Ferro reported he has spoken with Kendra Wills from MSU Extension regarding United Growth's plans to contact owners of large parcels in the Township for personal meetings regarding land preservation options. Kendra has stated they will seek our assistance in meeting with property owners, to identify the most appropriate representation to meet with specific property owners.

NWF Community Wildlife Habitat Certification Program:

Mark Fitzpatrick, Park Director, reported on the contacts made at the recent Conservation Expo at the Wittenbach Center in Vergennes Township. He also gave an update on the status of the NWF Community Wildlife Habitat Certification Program and the demonstration areas that are being developed.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS

Annual Report:

Crosby reviewed the list of items she has prepared for inclusion in the Annual Report due to the Board on June 30. She stated she would have a draft for review at the June meeting.

Cattle Access to Grand River:

Forbes brought up the issue of continued access by cattle to the Grand River on both the north and south banks, upstream of the M-21 bridge, and his concern with the legality of this practice and its impact on the river and its banks.

Crosby stated that when she spoke in the past with the representative from the Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, he indicated he would be willing to come over from Lansing and conduct a site inspection. She will follow up with him on this matter.

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO BETTE ROBERTS:

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to approve the resolution of appreciation to Bette Roberts, for her service on the Advisory Board.

Motion passed unanimously.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

The consensus of the Board was to continue meeting on the 2nd Thursday of the month through the summer, at 4:45 p.m.. Future meeting dates were established as follows:

June 12
July 10
August 14

VanDragt indicated he would not be present for the June meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf