

**ADA TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MAY 8, 2014 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby at 4:00 p.m.

Members present: Bergman, Crosby, Haga, Ladd, Roe and Steketee

Absent: Damstra, LeBlanc, VandenBerge

Staff present: Planning Director Ferro

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2014 MEETING:

It was moved by Steketee, seconded by Roe, to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2014 meeting as presented. Motion passed by unanimously.

STATUS OF PROJECTS:

a. Cooper Property Conservation Easement

Ferro reported that the Coopers just recently returned to town. Ferro distributed a draft of potential conservation easement terms. He stated that the draft addresses only the sections of a conservation easement that pertain to prohibited activities and uses, and permitted activities and uses. Ferro stated he has given this draft to the Coopers, and asked them to review it for comment.

Board members discussed whether it was appropriate to permit hunting on the property. In addition, the possibility of having public access rights granted in the easement was discussed. Ladd stated he would not support compensating the property owner for a conservation easement unless the easement did allow for public access to the property.

The Board also discussed whether the northern-most parcel on the property should be included in the easement, given that it is largely open meadow and does not have the mature woodland cover that exists on the other two parcels.

Ferro was requested to ask the appraiser to provide, as part of the appraisal, a separate value for the development rights on the northern parcel. He was also asked to seek information from the Coopers as to their intent with respect to desired compensation for an easement.

Ferro stated he would be conducting a site visit with the appraiser during the week of May 12.

b. Carl Creek Crossing Preserve – Driveway Creek Crossing Repair; Irrigation Pump House Relocation

Ferro reported the Township Board has authorized obtaining bids for the replacement of the damaged culvert under the driveway crossing of Carl Creek with a boardwalk structure. He also reported there has been no meeting scheduled yet with Gary Vos regarding the irrigation pump house relocation.

CONSIDERATION OF POTENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION – 970 BUTTRICK AVE SE

Ferro reported that the Township was approached by the owner of the property at 970 Buttrick Ave. regarding possible acquisition of all or a portion of the property by the Township. He stated the owner presented 3 alternative purchase scenarios and prices. Ferro stated site visits and point system evaluations were completed by he, Fitzgerald, Crosby and Bergman. Ferro noted the average point rating and all of the individual ratings were at the low end of the range compared to all other sites that have been evaluated in the past. Ferro also pointed out that the property owner is in the process of converting the former residential building on the property back to a residence, from its previous use as a church facility. Ferro stated he believed the alternative acquisition prices proposed by the owner for the various alternatives were high, particularly for the option of

purchasing the rear half of the property, which is nearly all wetland.

Following discussion, it was moved by Haga, seconded by Ladd, to take no action on the proposal, with direction to the Planning Director to communicate to the owner that the proposed alternative purchase prices are too high. Motion passed unanimously.

AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DESIGN OF CARL CREEK CROSSING PUBLIC ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS.

Ferro stated that since the estimated cost exceeds \$10,000, Township Board authorization is needed in order to proceed with issuing a request for proposals for design services for the Carl Creek Crossing public access improvements that are planned for construction this year.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Roe to recommend that we proceed with design and construction bids for the Carl Creek Crossing improvements.

Motion passed unanimously.

Bergman, Roe and Steketee agreed to serve on a Subcommittee to work with Ferro in preparing the RFP.

DISCUSSION/RE-EVALUATION OF ALLOCATION OF PARKS AND LAND PRESERVATION MILLAGE FUNDS

Advisory Board members reviewed fund balance projections for the Open Space Preservation Fund prepared by Ferro as part of the Capital Improvements Plan. Ferro stated that this material was being provided for two reasons – 1) to facilitate discussion whether additional open space funds should be allocated toward the cost of the planned Resource Building at Roselle Park; 2) in anticipation of the expiration of the Parks and Land Preservation millage at the end of 2016, to foster discussion of how use of the fund balance may relate to any efforts to obtain voter approval of a renewal of the millage in the future.

Board members discussed the allocation of funding from the millage between the Parks and Recreation Fund and the Open Space Fund that has been adopted as a policy, even though the allocation is not specified in the ballot language that authorized the parks and land preservation millage, with 58% of the millage revenue allocated to the Open Space Fund, and 42% to the Parks and Recreation Fund.

Ferro stated that even though we have these separate funding allocations, there is often a high degree of overlap between the open space preservation goals and parks/recreation goals. Ferro stated that Roselle Park is an example of this overlap, in that Roselle Park is largely a natural resource park that is maintained in its natural conditions, but that it is also valued by the public for its passive recreational opportunities. Ferro stated that the planned Resource Building can be viewed as enhancing the natural resource experience at the park.

Board members discussed the pros and cons of adjusting or having more flexibility in the allocation of funds from the millage. Ladd stated he felt there would be many voters who would feel betrayed if allocated open space funding is used for park purposes.

It was pointed out that the Open Space Fund has a balance in excess of \$1 million, and that if this balance is at this high level when the millage expires, it would be very difficult to obtain voter approval of a renewal of the millage. The view was also expressed that if additional Open Space funds were used for the Resource Building, voters would view this as a worthwhile and appropriate expenditure.

Ladd stated he would prefer the alternative of allowing the millage to expire, and leaving the current funding allocation intact.

Crosby stated that she had been asked prior to the meeting which would result in a greater public benefit – funding spent to acquire a conservation easement on the Cooper property or a like amount spent on the Resource Building at Roselle Park, and she had responded she believed the Roselle Park project would produce more long-term value for the public.

Steketee stated this issue is not a simple one, and that he agrees there is often not a clear boundary between the parks and open space functions of land.

Crosby stated she wished to postpone further consideration and action on the question of use of the funds until a future meeting with all members of the Advisory Board present.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Roe, to postpone action.
Motion passed by 5-0 vote, with Ladd abstaining

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burton Township Clerk
RS: jf