

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MAY 14, 2009 MEETING**

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

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

ABSENT: Randy Damstra, Jamie Ladd, Jeff Vandenberg

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Ferro, Planning Director

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to re-elect Betty Jo Crosby as Chairperson and Elise Roe as Vice-Chair of the Advisory Board.

Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE APRIL 16, 2009 MEETING

It was moved by Steketee, seconded by Roe, to approve the minutes of the April 16 meeting.

Motion approved unanimously.

STATUS REPORT ON OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION PROJECTS

a. 383 Pettis Ave. Property Acquisition

Ferro referenced the correspondence he had sent to Congressman Ehler's Grand Rapids office, requesting assistance in contacting Fannie Mae regarding the 383 Pettis property.

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

Ferro reported he had spoken to Rick Rankin, who told him that John Gilmore has been out of the country, and was just returning to Grand Rapids today. He stated he would bring the status of the mortgage release to John's attention on his return.

c. Agrawal Conservation Easement Donation:

Ferro reported he had spoken to Raj Agrawal recently, about the status of Agrawal's plans. Agrawal stated that they may build their new home on the property this year, and if they do, they will take care to ensure that it is completed in a manner consistent with the proposed conservation easement. Mr. Agrawal stated they may complete the easement donation this year, and he wanted to make sure we were still willing to accept the easement.

Ferro stated he told Agrawal that he had no reason to believe that the Township's willingness to accept the easement has changed, but that he would discuss this with the Advisory Board to confirm whether this was the case.

The consensus of the Board was that they remain willing to accept the easement as originally proposed, provided there is no change in the condition of the easement area that would warrant re-consideration.

STATUS OF POTENTIAL PROJECTS

a. Vanderwarf Family Trust Conservation Easement – Correspondence to VanderWarf Family

Ferro referred Board members to the correspondence he had sent to the VanderWarf family regarding potential property tax impacts of the conservation easement on the two parcels we are considering. He stated the family was scheduled to meet with a realtor a week ago, but the meeting was postponed until this week. He has not received any response from the family at this time.

b. Nominated Property at 5504 Ada Dr. – Status of Site Visit

The results of the site visit and preliminary evaluation using the scoring system that was conducted by Ferro and VanDragt was reviewed and discussed. VanDragt observed that the property is primarily “old field” vegetation transitioning to wooded conditions. He believes that the open space value of the property is primarily as a potential park site rather than high quality natural land.

Following discussion, it was moved by VanDragt, seconded by Haga, that the conclusion of the Advisory Board is that the site does not rank highly on the Township’s criteria for preservation of high priority open space, but that it may merit consideration as a pocket park.

Motion passed unanimously.

Haga indicated that he would refer this recommendation and the property to the Park Committee to consider again.

c. Roberts Property at 2455 Pettis Ave. – Status of Site Visit

It was noted that the Roberts property remains too wet to conduct an on-site evaluation. This will need to be scheduled for the future.

d. Thornapple River Property at 851 Thornapple River Dr.- Status of Ownership

Ferro reported he had confirmed that the 851 Thornapple River Dr. property is under contract to the Thornapple River Association.

e. Raymond Property at 180 Pettis Ave. SE - Preliminary Evaluation Results

Members discussed their observations based on members’ site visits to the property within the past several weeks.

Ferro distributed maps showing the boundaries of properties surrounding the Raymond property. He stated he had confirmed that the existing access easement to the Raymond property from Pettis Ave. is only 20 feet wide, which does not meet the Township’s current requirement of a 30-foot legal access width for a shared driveway serving up to 3 homes. Current zoning rules would therefore not permit any new lot splits or home sites to be accessed from Pettis Ave.

Ferro noted that there was vacant land to the east of the Raymond property with frontage on Honey Creek Ave. If access across this property to the Raymond property could be obtained, it would be feasible to create several home sites on the east side of the creek on the Raymond property. In addition, if the property on Pettis Ave on which the 20-foot easement is located could be obtained, additional home sites could be accessed on the existing driveway.

Ferro concluded that under current conditions, the Raymond property has very limited development potential, due to the existing access constraints. However, if a developer succeeded in acquiring adjacent property, these access constraints could be overcome, and the property could be more fully developed.

Ferro stated that if the Advisory Board wishes to pursue the potential acquisition of a conservation easement from the current owner, appropriate next steps would be to 1) establish the terms of the proposed easement, 2) have an appraisal completed and 3) decide whether to make an offer to the owner.

In discussion, it was noted that the Raymond family has indicated they may list the property for sale in the near future. Several members stated that this may affect their willingness to incur the costs of an appraisal, if the property is marketed and could be sold at any time.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by VanDragt, to direct staff to obtain fee proposals for conducting an appraisal of the property, and to develop proposed terms of a conservation easement on the property.

Motion passed unanimously.

MARKETING/PROMOTION

Crosby distributed copies of a draft mock up of the new open space brochure. She requested that all members review and comment on the draft text.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf