

**ADA TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE JULY 10, 2008 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:45 p.m., by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

**PRESENT:** Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga,, Jamie Ladd, Elise Roe, Rick Steketee, Mischelle Sytsma

**ABSENT:** Greg Forbes, Matt Nygren, Randy VanDragt

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

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Raj Agrawal, Renee Davis, Jim and Katie Boggs, Don and Sandy VanDerWarf,  
Ken VanDerWarf

It was moved by Elise Roe, seconded by Rick Steketee, to approve the agenda, subject to moving Item 6, Potential New Projects, to the top of the agenda.

Motion passed unanimously.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON PROPERTY AT 3201 EGYPT VALLEY AVE.**

Raj Agrawal, 1293 Winter Ridge, stated that he and his wife are interested in purchasing a 60-acre property on the west side of Egypt Valley Ave., north of 3 Mile Rd., for construction of their new home. They are proposing to place a conservation easement on a portion of the property, with the easement donated to Ada Township, to permanently restrict future development on about 26 acres. They have prepared a concept plan for a potential open space development on the property, which provides 10 lots, far less than the maximum development potential on the property. The conservation easement would be on the common open space in the development. They also prepared a potential maximum buildout plan showing that the property could be developed for 17 lots under 1 unit per 3 acre zoning. Mr. Agrawal stated they have no immediate plans to develop the property.

Ferro presented the summary reports from his and VanDragt's site visit and preliminary evaluation of the property. Ferro stated that Randy VanDragt was favorably impressed with the quality of the wetland vegetation along the seasonal stream corridor running through the property.

Ferro stated that he had some concern with the proximity of a couple building sites on the concept plan to the steep slopes bordering the stream corridor, and the potential for adverse impacts of home development on the open space area. He stated he would want to work with the developer on possible refinements to the plan.

Haga asked how this site relates to the Open Space Plan priorities. Ferro stated that the site is not located in one of the high priority areas identified in the Plan.

Mr. Agrawal was asked what timeframe he is interested in for completing an easement transaction. Agrawal stated that he needs to make a decision on purchasing the property by the end of August.

The Board consensus was that Ferro should work with Agrawal in making refinements to the plan, and bringing it back for further discussion at the August meeting.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON PROPERTY AT 2200 HONEY CREEK AVE. NE**

Ferro stated that he has had discussion with a member of the VanderWarf property about the Township possibly purchasing a conservation easement on a 68 acre vacant property at the northeast corner of 2 Mile Rd. and Honey Creek Ave. The family members who now own the property have a desire to keep

ownership of it and keep it undeveloped, but the recent "popup" of the assessed value of the property and a large increase in the property tax burden makes it difficult for them to afford to hold on to the property.

Ferro stated that he suggested the possible use of a conservation easement purchase by the Township as a means to accomplish both the family's goal of retaining private ownership of the property and the Township's goal of preserving high priority open space. He noted that the family would probably not want to have public access on the property, and would want to retain rights to hunt on the property and also possibly continue off-road vehicle use. All of these provisions could be negotiated as part of a conservation easement.

Ferro reviewed the evaluation reports he and VanDragt prepared, after their site visit. Ferro noted that the property is an old field reverting to woods on the south portion, and is more rolling and wooded on the north portion, with a stream corridor between the two areas. The stream corridor originates in wetlands that surround Chase Lake. He noted that the property has nearly ½ mile of frontage on Honey Creek Ave., and is immediately north of Seidman Park.

Ferro also noted that there are a few old abandoned vehicles and other articles on the property. There are also several off-road vehicle trails. One area of concern is erosion into the stream corridor that is coming from one of the off-road vehicle trails. If the Township were to pursue a conservation easement purchase, we would want to ensure that steps are taken to correct the potential for continued erosion and sediment being deposited into the creek corridor.

In discussion, it was suggested by Haga that an appropriate next step would be to obtain fee quotes for preparing an appraisal, if the Board wishes to further pursue the potential project.

Roe stated that protection of this property seems to fit our priorities, especially considering its proximity to Chase Lake. There was general consensus that we should proceed with obtaining fee quotes for an appraisal of the value of the development rights that would be acquired if we purchased a conservation easement on the property.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Jamie Ladd, to re-elect the current officers for another term of office, that being Betty Jo Crosby, Chairperson and Elise Roe, Vice-Chairperson.

Motion approved unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF MAY 8, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

It was noted that there were no minutes for the June meeting, since there was no quorum present to conduct business. It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to approve the minutes of the May 8 meeting, as presented.

Motion passed, with Ladd abstaining. Ladd stated his abstention was due to his absence at the meeting.

### **APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT TO TOWNSHIP BOARD**

Ladd asked whether the open space fund balance of \$607,042 cited in the report included the donation amount from the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. Haga stated that it doesn't, since the balance information in the report is through March 31, 2008. It was noted that this date should be referenced in the report, instead of the May 16 date contained in the draft report.

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Roe, to approve the Annual Report to the Township Board, subject to changing the date cited for the financial information from May 16 to March 31.

Motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC  
Ada Township Clerk  
rs:jf