

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 9, 2007 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m., by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, Greg Forbes, Jamie Ladd, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe, Mischelle Sytsma.

ABSENT: George Haga, Matt Nygren, Randy VanDragt

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Jim Ferro

PUBLIC PRESENT: 4

APPROVAL OF JULY 12, 2007 MEETING MINUTES

Moved by Roberts, seconded by Ladd, to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2007 meeting.

Motion approved unanimously.

DISCUSSION OF FOREST GLEN, INC. PROPERTY

By consensus, the Forest Glen, Inc. property was moved up on the agenda, to accommodate the public present.

Rick and Sue Steketee and Ken and Sandy Malone, residents of the Forest Glen neighborhood, were present.

Rick Steketee summarized his August 8 memo to the Advisory Board, which states that at the present time, they have pledges of \$100,825 toward the purchase of the Forest Glen, Inc. property. Rick noted that several donors have indicated an interest in making their donations over two years, and several have expressed a desire to have a conservation easement placed on the property to ensure that it remains in its current undeveloped condition.

It was noted by Crosby that it would not be reasonable or feasible to totally prohibit all public access to the property, given that a significant amount of public funds would be contributed to the purchase.

In discussion, there was support for the concept of using a conservation easement to define what could be done with the property in the future. It was noted that, given the physical character of the property, the Township's interest in providing public access to the property would probably be limited to a single trail and boardwalk in the southern portion of the property, in areas which are most removed from the homes in the Forest Glen neighborhood.

Rick Steketee stated that even the possibility of a walking path might result in the loss of some pledges, but that he could not state this with certainty.

It was suggested that perhaps the wording of an easement could define portions of the property where disturbance of any type would be prohibited, particularly in the northern portion of the property, that would address donor concerns over possible future changes to the property.

It was also pointed out in discussion that if the Land Conservancy were to accept a conservation easement on the property, they would probably require the payment to the Conservancy of a one-time fee to pay for the long term costs of monitoring and enforcing the easement. It was felt that this would probably be in the range of \$5,000. It was suggested that the cost of this "stewardship endowment" could possibly be shared between the Township and neighborhood donors.

Ferro stated that Haga had asked him to communicate to the Board that he has concerns about placing restrictions on the property, and does not necessarily support using a conservation easement. Ladd suggested that we may want to pursue obtaining an option on the property, so that we would have some time to develop the details of a proposed conservation easement that would be acceptable to both donors and the Township, and possibly develop a plan that would show where a future path would go, if one were developed on the property.

The Steketee's and Malone's were thanked for attending the meeting.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REPORT

The Board reviewed the report provided by Supervisor Haga indicating that, as of 7/31/07, there was a balance of \$703,924, with an expected additional \$203,989 for Fiscal Year 2007-08. Crosby reported that the "Ada Fund" that is held by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan has a balance of \$44,928, as of May 31, 2007.

APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT:

Crosby noted that the Annual Report to the Township Board has been prepared, and is overdue for being submitted to the Township Board.

It was moved by Forbes, seconded by Roe, to approve the Annual Report for submittal to the Township Board.

DISCUSSION OF PROPERTIES OF INTEREST:

a. FEMA Grant for Acquisition of 383 Pettis Ave. Property

Ferro reported that the Township Board was being requested at its August 13 meeting to authorize making a formal purchase offer on the property. The realtor representing the owner has stated that he needs a signed purchase agreement to present to the mortgage holders on the property in order to obtain their signoff on the purchase price as being payment in full.

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

Ferro reported we still are waiting for signatures on quit claim deeds from Bruce and Lois Poppen, to clear up the ownership questions on the property donated by John Gilmore.

Board members expressed concern that this process was taking so long. Ferro stated he would contact legal counsel to see if this can be hastened.

c. Forest Glen, Inc. Property at 5686 Forest Bend Dr.

It was suggested by Ladd that it would be desirable to pursue a two-step option agreement with Forest Glen, Inc., similar to the approach that was used on the option for the Thornapple River backwater property, so that we would have some time to work on the details of a proposed conservation easement on the property, and confirm donation pledges.

It was moved by Roberts, seconded by Sytsma, to recommend that the Township propose an Option Agreement for the Forest Glen, Inc. property, with consideration of \$500 for an initial 3 month option, extendible for an additional 3 months for additional consideration of \$1,000.

Motion passed unanimously.

MARKETING/PROMOTION COMMITTEE REPORT

Crosby reported that she has contacted Goodwillie Environmental School about initiating the Seidman Park Stewardship Project this fall, now that we have the legal liability waiver form needed from the County.

Crosby also reported briefly on the status of the Champion Tree Contest with Vergennes Township and the Eastern Townships Photography Contest.

She also reported that Bob Lowry has indicated a willingness to head up a NWF Community Wildlife Habitat Certification Program effort starting in November.

Crosby pointed out that he has obtained NWF certification of her property as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat, and handed out application forms to members to encourage them to do the same.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURNMENT: It was noted that the next meeting is on Thursday, September 13.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk

rs:jf