

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 2010 MEETING**

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

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, Randy Damstra, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Elise Roe, Rick Steketee, Jeff VandenBerge

ABSENT: Randy VanDragt, Mischelle Sytsma

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Ferro, Planning Director

PUBLIC PRESENT: Mark Andrews

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JULY 8, 2010 MEETING

It was moved by VandenBerge, seconded by Ladd, to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2010 meeting.

Motion approved unanimously.

STATUS OF PROJECTS

- a. Possible Agricultural Conservation Easement on VanderWarf Property at 2025 Honey Creek Ave.

Mark Andrews was present to discuss his pending purchase of the property at 2025 Honey Creek Ave., and his interest in the sale of a conservation easement on the property to Ada Township.

Ferro stated that he has discussed the possibility of an easement transaction with Mr. Andrews. The easement document would likely be very similar to the one that was drafted earlier for a possible easement transaction with the VanderWarf family. The easement was previously worded to allow for agricultural use of the property, which is Mr. Andrews' intent.

A question was asked whether Mr. Andrews would have interest in donating a portion of the value of the easement. Mr. Andrews stated that this would not be likely, as he needs the proceeds of an easement purchase to invest in the property. Andrews described his plans for a "Community-Supported Agriculture," or CSA farm on the property.

Crosby asked whether the wooded areas on the property would be preserved, and Andrews responded that they would be protected. He stated that the farming activity would only occupy 10-12 acres of the 30 acre property.

The Board discussed the possibility of obtaining an update of the appraisal that was prepared for the Township approximately 2 years ago.

There was consensus among Board members that the Board remains interested in acquiring a conservation easement on this property.

(Note: Elise Roe arrived at this time, at 4:25 p.m.)

Damstra commented that he was not sure that the Township should expend additional funds on an appraisal update without having an agreement in place committing to the easement.

Following discussion, it was moved by Damstra, seconded by Ladd, to recommend that we pursue an easement agreement on the property, and obtain an update of the previous appraisal, with the cost thereof to be initially paid by the Seller, with the provision that the Seller would be reimbursed for the cost of the appraisal update at closing of the easement purchase.

Motion passed unanimously.

b. Raymond Property – 180 Pettis Ave. NE - Correspondence from Potential Buyer

Ferro reported that correspondence has been received on behalf of the neighbor who is considering purchasing the Raymond property, requesting information on the potential property tax assessment consequences of a conservation easement on the property.

It was suggested that Ferro discuss with the neighboring property owner the possibility of including portions of their existing property within the conservation easement.

c. Gilmore Property on Thornapple River

No activity on this project was reported.

d. Botruff Property on Winding Brook – Status of Site Visits

No activity on this project was reported. Ferro stated he still wished to have additional members of the Advisory Board visit this property.

e. Cooper Property on Bailey Dr. – Possible Cost Sharing of Appraisal

Ladd and Ferro reported on a meeting held with Dick Cooper regarding a possible conservation easement on the Cooper property.

Haga suggested that if we wish to pursue obtaining an easement on the property, that a preliminary evaluation using our point rating system should be completed.

Ferro was requested to send the blank rating sheets to members by e-mail, for members who have visited the property to complete.

The Board discussed the pros and cons of obtaining public access rights on easement property. Crosby suggested that a position paper be prepared on the issue of when it is appropriate to request public access.

f. 383 Pettis Ave. Site Restoration – Set Date for Volunteer Planting Day

A date of Tuesday, September 21, at 5:00 pm was set for a volunteer planting day to plant native trees and shrubs on the 383 Pettis Ave. property.

4. Marketing/Promotion

- a. Proposed Mailing and Educational Event for Creek Frontage Property Owners on Honey Creek and Egypt Creek
 - 1. Draft Letter to Property Owners
 - 2. Tentative Event Date – Tuesday, October 19

5. Member and Staff Comments/Reports

It was noted that an article on open space is needed for the next Township Adaview newsletter. Highlighting fall as an appropriate time for control of invasive species such as autumn olive, Asiatic bittersweet and purple loosestrife was suggested as a topic.

b. Public Input Event Dates for Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update

Board members requested that relevant pages from the current Plan be sent to them for review. Ferro will do this via email.

Crosby brought up the prevalence of Autumn Olive on Forest Hills Public Schools properties, and the possibility of engaging the school district in efforts to remove them. Crosby stated she would be contacting Superintendent Dan Behm about a partnership with the district.

Roe suggested finding an advocate for this effort within the staff in each school building.

ADJOURNMENT

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on September 9. Steketee and Ladd stated they would not be present at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Burton
Ada Township Clerk
rs:jf