

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2006 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m.

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe, Mischelle Sytsma, Randy Van Dragt.

ABSENT: Greg Forbes and Matt Nygren

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Jim Ferro and Parks Director Wendy Tatar

Guests: John Gilmore and Sue Steketee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Moved by Sytsma, seconded by Roe, to approve the minutes of the July 27th meeting.

Motion passed.

Haga informed members that the Township Board had reappointed Nygren and Roberts to another term on the Advisory Board.

REQUEST FROM JOHN GILMORE TO ACCEPT A CONSERVATION EASEMENT:

Members were provided with information regarding this request prior to the meeting. Ferro introduced John Gilmore and explained that Mr. Gilmore would like the Township to accept a conservation easement on a portion of his property located at 7590 East Fulton Street. There was discussion regarding the property. Ferro explained that a recommendation to the Township Board from the Advisory Board as to whether the easement should be accepted was being sought. Members need to consider if the land owner will provide access for Township staff to monitor the property, if public access will be allowed and if the owner should be asked to provide a small amount of funding to cover the long-term cost of monitoring.

When questioned, Gilmore stated that he wasn't in a hurry to get this completed. Gilmore stated that he was willing to provide public access to the property. He noted that he did not know what he would do with the property if the Township did not wish to accept the easement. Haga offered to communicate with staff of MDOT regarding the Township obtaining the piece of property that is the old bed of the Thornapple River, which is adjacent to the Gilmore property.

Haga moved to accept the application of John Gilmore for a conservation easement on 7590 East Fulton Street to direct Township staff contact to MDOT regarding the adjoining property, and to request that a delegation from the Advisory Board conduct a Preliminary Evaluation of the property against our site acquisition rating system. Seconded by Van Dragt. Motion passed unanimously.

UPDATE REGARDING NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY:

Van Dragt presented a handout to members of the information compiled by Dr. David Warners, Ben VanderWeide and Nate Haan. Van Dragt explained that there are prime natural areas within the Township and any properties with a Floristic Quality Index (FQI) rating above 35 are good. There is one more inspection of Seidman Park that will take place. Van Dragt stated that the standout property is located on Two Mile Road. Haga explained that Forbes had agreed to provide a presentation on natural features to the Board at their July meeting and suggested that this information be tied into that presentation. The final report is due in December.

DISCUSSION ON PROPERTIES OF INTEREST:

Members received copies of a letter sent to the Ada Hospital for Animals from Haga on 8/31/06 and information from the Kent County Agricultural Preservation Board regarding the Jakeway property prior to the meeting.

Ada Hospital for Animals

Haga explained that a meeting with the owners had occurred earlier in the week regarding the option agreement we have proposed to them. They are asking for \$137,000 with a 50-year license agreement to allow pedestrian access from the Animal Hospital property to Roselle Park and the riverfront on the existing "two-track" through the parcel. Ferro stated that the Township was ready to sign the option but the owners didn't commit to the agreement, although they didn't object to it either. He pointed out that a decision needs to be made whether funding for this acquisition would come from the parks portion of the parks and land preservation millage, the open space allocation, or both.

383 Pettis Ave.

Ferro stated that the status of this parcel had not changed since our last meeting and we are waiting on the State to see what the next step in the process is. There is no agreed upon price yet. Ferro stated that the property is no longer listed so we will be dealing directly with the owner. Haga stated that he would check with the Treasurer to see if the summer taxes had been paid.

Carew Property

Ferro pointed out that the asking price for the property is supposedly \$800,000. The owner of a connecting parcel of land on Hall Street was contacted by a developer regarding purchase of that land and the developer is interested in Carew's also. The Hall Street property owner has indicated that he was contemplating selling. Haga stated that he would check with the Assessor on the assessed value of the Carew property.

Jaarda Property

Ferro updated members, as this property located on Alta Dale Ave. had not been discussed in some time. Ferro stated that the developer that was interested in the parcel had broken off his discussions with the owner.

Crosby introduced Sue Steketee, who owns property on Forest Glen. Sue's husband Rick had surveyed the Forest Glen neighborhood residents a couple of years ago, and received non-binding commitments of about \$100,000 to go toward the Township purchasing the property. Crosby asked if they might contact neighbors again to see if the commitment was still there and if there might be any additional interest that wasn't there before. Haga offered to contact Jaarda to ask if he is interested in selling the parcel to the Township.

Despres property

This property has been sold and Crosby informed members that it appears that a new home is being constructed there. Ferro confirmed that a new house is planned on the property, and the new owner may split off the portion of the property with the old farm house on it. As this was a property that was considered for the PDR program in the past, Crosby asked members if there was still interest in it. Ferro indicated that the new owner wants to plant fruit trees on the property.

Eddie Pettis Property

Roe stated that the Land Conservancy of West Michigan had made an offer to Edie Pettis for 93 acres in conjunction with the Kent County Parks Department. According to Julie Stoneman, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy, Ms. Pettis has not accepted the offer.

Wilderness Lake

A 4.3-acre parcel is for sale for \$139,900. Ladd asked if there would be interest in putting a pocket park there. Ladd stated he would contact Forest Hills Schools regarding the adjacent school district property.

MARKETING/PROMOTION:

Crosby stated that the MSU Extension has put out a lesson plan for teachers called "Dragonfly Pond" and wondered if we might do something to promote its use in classrooms. Sytsma agreed to meet with instructors if it can be arranged with the schools. Sytsma stated that Calvin College has an Environmental Assessment Program with the schools that she is involved with, as is Van Dragt.

Crosby asked how we might be able to get road signs regarding watersheds posted to inform residents when they pass between watersheds. Ferro stated that we would need to develop a plan so that sign locations could be established. Ferro indicated that we would need to study a watershed boundary map.

SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING:

As several members had to leave, the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 26th at 4:00 pm

MEMBER/STAFF COMMENTS:

Ferro stated that copies of the Preservation Easement Agreement for the Kovi Oaks Court development that the Board approved in July were included in the agenda packet. Crosby stated that the Advisory Board should monitor the stewardship of that property.

Crosby announced that the balance of the "Ada Fund" with the Land Conservancy of West Michigan is up to \$43,158.

Crosby asked members if they had an opportunity to review the information that Ferro had passed on regarding the open space program in San Miguel County, CO. As most had indicated that they had not, she briefly summarized the information and asked that members look it over when they have the opportunity.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk

rs:jf