

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2006 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT: Greg Forbes, Matt Nygren and Jamie Ladd

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

Guests: John Gilmore, Rick Rankin, Tom Korth.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Moved by Roberts, seconded by Sytsma, to approve the minutes of the September 21 meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

REQUEST FROM JOHN GILMORE TO ACCEPT A CONSERVATION EASEMENT AT 7590 EAST FULTON ST.:

John Gilmore was present regarding this request, as well as attorney Rick Rankin. Ferro distributed copies of the site evaluation forms that were completed by him and Van Dragt following their site visit to the property on October 24. VanDragt reported that, although the land area involved is small, the site has a surprising amount of diverse habitat. There was evidence of a fox den on the property, and evidence of beaver activity. There are also several large specimen silver maple trees on the site. Van Dragt stated that although he did not observe any protected species, it is possible the site could harbor such species, and it is likely that the site would have a Floristic Quality Index (FQI) rating higher than 30. He stated he believed that the site merited protection.

Ferro reported that he had contacted the MDOT regarding the adjacent land that is shown on the County tax parcel maps as being owned by MDOT. He stated that MDOT was not aware that they still owned this property, and does not make any claim to it. MDOT has asked the County Property Description and Mapping Department to look into the ownership of this property.

Mr. Gilmore was asked whether he would provide public access to the area for the trail shown on the DEQ permit plan, and Mr. Gilmore indicated that he would. The consensus of the Advisory Board was that the details concerning public access could be worked out at the Township Board level.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to recommend that the Township accept a conservation easement on 2.3 acres of the Gilmore property.

Motion passed unanimously.

ADA HOSPITAL FOR ANIMALS PROPERTY:

Haga reported that negotiations have been completed with the Ada Hospital for Animals for purchase of 17.5 acres of land from them. The option agreement provides that the Township is to pay property taxes billed after January 1, 2006, in addition to a purchase price of \$137,535

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Roberts, to recommend that the Township exercise the option to purchase the 17.5 acres from the Ada Hospital for Animals, and to recommend that the purchase cost be

divided evenly between the parks and land preservation allocations of the parks and land preservation fund.

Motion approved unanimously.

It was noted that a site evaluation and rating should be carried out for this property.

JAARDA PROPERTY ON ALTA DALE AVE.

Haga reported that he had spoken to Gary Jaarda regarding an acceptable price for acquisition of this land. Crosby noted that a neighborhood representative believes that the Forest Glen neighborhood would still be willing to contribute approximately \$100,00 toward this acquisition. The consensus of the Board was that the asking price was too high, and that no further action should be taken.

OTHER PROPERTIES OF INTEREST:

Property at 851 Thornapple River Dr.:

Ferro reported on the property adjacent to the homeowners' association boat launch on the Thornapple Dam backwater, on Thornapple River Dr. He noted that the .44 acre property is listed for sale at \$424,900, and that the Township Assessor estimates the market value to be \$249,150. The consensus of the Board was that the asking price was excessive, given the small size and shallow depth of the property. Ferro stated that the property has a very small allowable building envelope conforming with setback requirements.

Tom Korth, audience member, noted that the property has very high visibility at an important entrance to the community, and merits consideration for protection due to the visual impact that a house would have at this location.

Crosby expressed the view that open space funding alone would not be appropriate for acquisition of this property. Ferro noted that perhaps a package of funding from multiple sources could be put together, with a contribution from the open space funds.

It was noted that this property should also be brought to the attention of the Parks Committee. It was also noted that a site evaluation and rating against our acquisition criteria should also be carried out.

It was moved by Van Dragt, seconded by Roberts, to endorse in principle the Township's acquisition of the property at 851 Thornapple River Dr., based on its high visibility and aesthetic value as open space.

Motion passed unanimously.

Property at 383 Pettis Ave.

Ferro reported that we are still waiting on the State and FEMA to proceed with further steps to secure grant funding for the acquisition of this property.

Eddie Pettis Property

Crosby stated that the Land Conservancy and Kent County have not reached a purchase price agreement with the owner at this time.

Property at Wilderness Trail/Honey Creek Ave.

Ferro stated he had contacted Forest Hills Public Schools regarding the potential availability of the property owned by the District on Honey Creek Ave., adjacent to the 4 acres that is for sale. Tim Raymer from the School District stated that they have no plans to sell the property at this time. He noted he asked that the District let the Township know if there ever is interest in selling this land, and Tim indicated that he would do so.

STATUS OF NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY:

Ferro noted that a public presentation on the Natural Features Inventory results is scheduled for Wednesday, November 29, at 7:00 p.m.

MARKETING/PROMOTION:

Crosby reported on the Stewardship Cluster meeting she had attended the previous evening, and the importance of stewardship activities in raising public awareness of natural areas. It was noted that there is a lot of information available at the stewardshipnetwork.org web site.

The possibility of forming a stewardship group for Seidman Park was discussed. It was noted that the Park is in need of a management plan and management efforts to control invasive plants and to maintain trails. The idea of a partnership between Kent County Parks, Ada Township, Goodwillie Environmental School and the Land Conservancy was discussed.

SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, December 1, at 4:00 pm

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk

rs:jf