

**ADA TOWNSHIP
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 8, 2007 MEETING**

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

PRESENT: Betty Jo Crosby, Greg Forbes, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Matt Nygren, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe, Mischelle Sytsma, Randy VanDragt

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Jim Ferro

PUBLIC PRESENT: 3

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 13, 2007 MEETING MINUTES

Ferro noted that, as there was no quorum present for the October 11 meeting, there were no minutes for the meeting to be approved. Roe noted that the September 13 minutes should show her as present at the meeting. Moved by Sytsma, seconded by Ladd, to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2007 meeting, with correction to note Roe being present.

Motion approved unanimously.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to retain the current officers in their respective positions, those being: Chairperson – Betty Jo Crosby, Vice-Chairperson – Elise Roe.

Motion passed unanimously.

ACQUISITION OF FOREST GLEN, INC. (GARY JAARDA) PROPERTY

(Forbes arrived at the meeting at this time (4:30 p.m.))

Ferro reviewed materials contained in the packet concerning this potential property acquisition. He reviewed the proposed terms of the conservation easement, status of neighboring property owner donation pledges and estimated costs to the Township for completing the transaction. Costs to the Township in addition to the \$300,400 purchase price include the cost of a survey, Phase I Environmental Report, miscellaneous closing costs, and the payment of \$6,500 to the Land Conservancy for the required Stewardship Endowment.

It was moved by Haga, seconded by Sytsma, to recommend that the Township proceed with the acquisition of the Forest Glen, Inc. property, at 5686 Forest Bend Dr.

Motion passed unanimously.

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION OF BILLBOARD SITE ADJACENT TO M-21 AND THE GRAND RIVER

Ferro stated that a potential purchase agreement has been negotiated with Wing, LLC, to acquire the property at 7980 East Fulton St. This is the property for which a permit has been issued for the installation of a new billboard. The potential purchase is being brought before the Open Space Advisory Board to consider whether to allocate land preservation funds for the purchase of the property. The negotiated purchase price is \$329,000. Ferro noted that the Advisory Board could recommend allocating an amount of open space funding less than the total purchase price, and the Township Board could consider combining these funds with other possible funding sources.

Ferro noted that he, Forbes and VanDragt had all visited the property, and had completed preliminary evaluations of the property using the preliminary evaluation criteria and rating system.

Ferro, Forbes and VanDragt reviewed their ratings of the property. VanDragt commented that the property has characteristics of many undeveloped river corridor sites, with an upland area of natural vegetation along the river bank, and a wetland area further from the riverbank. He noted that the property is important by virtue of the existing concentration of preserved river corridor property in the vicinity.

Ferro noted that he had given the property a high score under the development potential criterion, based on the use of the site for a billboard, the high visibility of the site, and the goal of the Open Space Plan to preserve the scenic and visual qualities of the Township.

Haga stated that he had a hard time justifying the purchase price.

Forbes stated that he has a hard time justifying this purchase, considering the price. He questioned whether a billboard is really an icon of blight, and pointed out that there are already two billboards in the vicinity.

Roe commented that there is already some visual degradation in the immediate vicinity, and the price for the property is high.

VanDragt noted that we have put a lot of effort into the preservation of the Grand River corridor, and he sees this as a key component of that effort.

The Chairperson opened the meeting to public comment.

John Westra, Township Trustee and resident of Adacroft Commons, stated that Adacroft Commons and Ada Woods residents have zero access to open space. He stated that this land has no unique natural characteristics that would justify the purchase, other than preventing a billboard.

Bernie Veldkamp, 5580 Hall St., stated that a billboard on this site would be very detrimental to the river corridor through the community. The river corridor is a gem that should be kept natural.

Public comment was closed.

It was moved by VanDragt, seconded by Sytsma, to recommend that the Township purchase the property at 7980 East Fulton St., and that open space funds in the amount of \$200,000 be allocated to the acquisition.

In discussion, Ladd spoke in support of the motion, stating that he believes this is worth the investment.

Nygren stated that he would hate to see this expenditure of \$200,000 keep us from doing something else important with the funds.

Haga moved to amend the motion, to reduce the amount of open space funding proposed to \$150,000. The motion to amend was seconded by VanDragt.

On a vote to amend the motion, the vote was 8 yes, 1 no, with Ladd voting no. Motion passed.

The Chair called the question on the amended motion, to recommend that the property at 7980 East Fulton St. be acquired by the Township, with open space funds in the amount of \$150,000 allocated to the acquisition.

Motion passed unanimously.

STATUS REPORT ON OTHER PROPERTIES OF INTEREST

a. Acquisition of 383 Pettis Ave., FEMA Grant-Funded

Ferro reported that the lenders have still not approved the proposed purchase agreement. Another 30-day extension of the agreement has been signed by the Township and the seller.

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

Ferro reported that a quit claim deed has been signed by Bruce Poppen. It is currently in Lois Poppen's hands, and she has requested compensation in return for signing the quit claim deed.

It was moved by VanDragt, seconded by Ladd, to recommend that staff negotiate with Ms. Poppen for the quit claim deed, and offer compensation not to exceed \$1,000.

Motion passed unanimously.

It was also suggested that the Township should request John Gilmore to pay for the cost of obtaining title to the property, since he did not have clear title to the land which he offered to the Township.

MEMBER AND STAFF COMMENTS: None

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC
Ada Township Clerk

rs:jf