

**ADA TOWNSHIP  
OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 13, 2007 MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m., by Chairperson Betty Jo Crosby.

**PRESENT:** Betty Jo Crosby, George Haga, Jamie Ladd, Bette Roberts, Elise Roe, Mischelle Sytsma, Randy VanDragt

**ABSENT:** Greg Forbes, Matt Nygren (It was noted that both Forbes and Nygren had called in their absences.)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Planning Director Jim Ferro; Parks Director Mark Fitzpatrick

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** None

Haga introduced new Township Parks Director, Mark Fitzpatrick.

**APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 8, 2007 MEETING MINUTES**

It was moved by Sytsma, seconded by Roberts, to approve the minutes of the November 8 meeting, as presented.

Motion approved unanimously.

**STATUS REPORT ON OPEN SPACE PROJECTS**

**7686 Forest Bend Property**

Ferro reported that all of the steps needed to close on this acquisition are in progress, including Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, boundary survey and title insurance. Documents for signature have been sent to the owner for signature and return, since he will not be in town for the closing.

Ferro stated there has been one hiccup regarding a title exception, due to a possible boundary description overlap with an adjoining property. He stated our surveyor believes it only involves about 4 or 5 thousand square feet. Legal counsel is working with the title company in hopes of getting them to insure over the exception. We don't want this to delay the closing till after the new year, because the township will be liable for any 2008 property taxes.

Ladd suggested that we give up the land in question, and quit claim it to the adjoining owner, as long as the land isn't important to us and it's only a small area.

Ferro stated that this alternative has been suggested as an option by legal counsel. Haga stated he would pursue this option with the attorney.

**7980 East Fulton St. Property Acquisition**

Ferro stated that we have closed on this property, and it is now owned by the Township.

Discussion ensued regarding the negative coverage of this acquisition by the news media, and ways in which the positive side might be conveyed to the public, regarding the importance of this acquisition to the Open Space Plan goals of protecting the visual character of the Township and open land protection along the Grand River. Ferro stated that a response to the Grand Rapids Press is being prepared by the Township, to be submitted for publication as a "Dissent" op-ed column.

The public reaction to the purchase was also discussed. Ferro pointed out that the public concerns raised have included why the Township hasn't more actively pursued Grand River corridor open space through direct property owner contact. We have discussed this in the past, but have not yet pursued it in a systematic way.

VanDragt noted that there is a lot of time-consuming background work involved.

Bette Roberts volunteered to be involved in implementing an effort to contact property owners.

### **383 Pettis Ave. Property Acquisition**

Ferro reported he talked to the realtor today, and the realtor stated that the first mortgage holder has finally agreed to sign off on the sale price, which has been the source of the holdup. As soon as this occurs, they will go to the second mortgage holder for their approval. The purchase agreement between the Township and the seller has been extended through January.

### **Gilmore/MDOT Property on former Thornapple River – Status of Title**

Ferro reported on the status of negotiations over the price requested for signing off on a quit claim deed., by one of the parties with an ownership interest in the property quit claimed to the Township by John Gilmore.

Ladd suggested that we request John Gilmore to bear the cost of obtaining title, since he did not convey to us what he represented he owned.

Ferro stated he would pursue this.

### **SEIDMAN PARK STEWARDSHIP PROJECT**

Crosby reported she has been in communication with Anne Keller, teacher at Goodwillie Environmental School, regarding the Seidman Park autumn olive removal project. She stated that she will be in further contact with her in the Spring, when students are assigned their spring environmental projects. Anne is looking to us for primary responsibility for spearheading the project.

Crosby also noted that the Stewardship Network, with Melanie Good from the Land Conservancy in a spearheading role, will be sponsoring a garlic mustard removal volunteer effort next spring at Seidman Park, timed to coincide with Earth Day.

### **NWF COMMUNITY WILDLIFE HABITAT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

Crosby reported that Bob Lowry has mentioned that he is ready to pursue this project. Mark Fitzpatrick stated he also can be of assistance in this effort.

**ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:** It was noted that the next meeting is on Thursday, January 10, at 4:00 p.m..

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Deborah Ensing Millhuff, CMC  
Ada Township Clerk  
rs:jf