

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday

March 20, 2008 - 3:00 p.m.

County Administration Building, Conference Room B
200 Grand River Avenue, 2nd Floor, Port Huron, MI 48060

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jim Reid called meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Jim Reid, Chuck Kwasnik, Jim Hayes, Sue Sniegocki, and Ken Langmesser

Support Staff: Dave Struck, Senior Planner

Excused: Dianna Seifert, Steve Simasko, Terry Gill, and Rick Mills

Guests: Kathe Hale, MSU Extension

3. Citizens Wishing to be Heard

None.

4. Approval of January 17, 2008 Minutes

Jim Hayes suggested deleting the word "generously" on page 2 of the minutes. Chuck Kwasnik made a motion to accept the January 17, 2008 minutes with the revision, Sue Sniegocki seconded, all in favor, motion passes unanimously.

5. Communications

Dave Struck explained the thank you letter and the MSU Biofuels information that were in the packet. Dave also talked about the MPC Winter Workshop that was held February 26 and its focus on alternative energy.

Jim Reid discussed a breakfast meeting with the County Board of Commissioners the previous day, which included various agribusiness interests. Jim mentioned that there were 50-60 people in attendance and that it was a good opportunity to meet with County Commissioners on farming issues. Jim Hayes made a motion to receive and file the communications, Sue Sniegocki seconded, all in favor, motion passed unanimously.

6. Financial Report

February Report

Dave Struck explained the carryover funds from 2007. He also noted that the donation from Michigan Milk is now on the report and that the Ag Board recently received a \$250 donation from Eastern Michigan Bank, which will show up on next month's report.

Dave explained that Jim Hayes would need to get a receipt from Fahley Farms for the Fall Farm Tour reimbursement. Jim Hayes would then be reimbursed for the money expended on the Farm Tour.

Dave asked the Board about the Ag Preserve Boards of Michigan meeting that was recently held and the status of that organization's funding. Jim Reid said he would find out more about what is going on at the state level.

Jim Hayes made a motion to acknowledge receipt of the financial report, Chuck Kwasnik seconded, all in favor, motion passes unanimously.

7. **Old Business**

a. Emmett Township Planning Commission Meeting

Jim Reid gave a brief background synopsis on why Scott Mueller called for help regarding the required components that must be in Emmett Township's Master Plan in order for the township to qualify for the state Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

Dave explained what took place during the meeting, which was Monday, March 17. Dave noted that he met with Emmett's Planning Commission for about an hour, highlighting the various elements that the state requires in local master plans in order to be eligible for farmland preservation grant funds. Dave also explained the information packet that he sent to Scott Mueller prior to the meeting. Dave mentioned that the primary work that Emmett Township will have to do for its master plan centers on its future land use map. Lastly, Dave noted that members of Kenockee Township's Planning Commission came in recently and requested the same information regarding farmland preservation and master plans.

b. Regional Farm Directory

Kathe Hale from MSU Extension informed the Board about her discussions with neighboring counties in the region regarding a potential agricultural tourism directory. Kathe mentioned that it has been a slow process, but there is some interest. There are some concerns about the number of other online resources that already exist, such as Market Maker; however, none of them have an agricultural tourism focus like what this effort would entail. Kathe noted that Market Maker is up and running now and that it was being updated slowly due to student workers changing with the new semester. The regional directory would most likely include St. Clair, Macomb, Lapeer, Sanilac, Huron, Tuscola, and Genesee counties.

Kathe passed around the Sanilac tourism guide. She discussed a meeting that she and Dave had with Joan Nagelkirk, the printer of the Sanilac guide. Kathe received an initial quote of \$13,712 for 25,000 color copies and \$10,158 for 25,000 black and white. She noted that color would be preferred. Kathe discussed whether the region's farm bureaus would potentially contribute a small amount of seed money and then Joan Nagelkirk would go out to businesses to sell advertising to make up the difference. Jim Reid said he would discuss this at the next Farm Bureau meeting on Monday, March

24. Kathe said she is hoping to pull a group together from all counties in April to discuss the project further.

c. “Locally-Grown” Program

Kathe Hale talked about the “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” program. Dave noted the sample custom logos that were in the packet. Kathe noted that she just wanted to introduce this program right now to show what other options were out there. There is also “Edible Communities.” Jim Reid asked about the Port Huron Farmers’ Market at Vantage Point. He inquired as to whether the Farmers’ Market would be a good starting point to launch a locally-grown program. Kathe gave a quick overview of this year’s Farmers’ Market at Vantage Point. She also mentioned that Gilda Schott of 4-H received a grant to start a youth farmstand program. Kathe will talk to Liz at the Farmers’ Market about the potential of a locally-grown program.

d. Newsletter

Dave asked if the Board still wanted to increase the distribution list by lowering the acreage threshold to 20 acres and above and only doing two newsletters per year. Ken Langmesser said that it would be good to get the newsletter out to more people to help the Board’s efforts. Chuck Kwasnik agreed but stated that money continues to be an issue. Dave said that a decision did not have to be made today. He would find out what the change in cost would be and report back at the May meeting. The Board discussed potential articles for the next newsletter. The newsletter will no longer have a small section focusing on Ag Board members; instead it will focus more on content. Potential articles include a piece on Leo Westrick, conservation easements, and locally-grown efforts. Ken said he would write up a piece on the Westrick farm.

8. New Business

a. Donation of Conservation Easement Process

Dave highlighted the Conservation Easement Brochure and other materials on donating development rights in the packet. There was discussion on some other issues that Chuck may need to look into, such as getting an attorney to review the easement language and a financial planner to clearly navigate through the tax benefits. Dave noted that many more questions remain, such as the status of Kenosha Township’s plan and the level of involvement of other governmental agencies. It is also unclear as to who would keep and monitor the easement. Sue mentioned that perhaps the Ag Board could create a sub-committee to handle the monitoring. Dave said he would continue to find out more information. He mentioned that Kara Schrader of the MPC has made contacts with other agencies that have gone through the process. The Michigan Department of Agriculture will be able to help the Board as it gets a better picture of what will happen. Ken and Jim Hayes

suggested talking with Tom Valentine of the Lapeer Conservation District. Tom helped Lapeer County through a donation process.

b. International Day Parade - July

Jim Reid asked the Board members if they wanted the Ag Board to participate in this year's parade. Last year's parade was rained out. Jim Reid said he would try to reserve the big cow from Michigan Milk, like he did two years ago. Ken Langmesser made a motion that the Agricultural Preservation Board participate in the 2008 International Day Parade, Sue Sniegocki seconded, all in favor, motion passes unanimously.

Ken also asked if the Board was going to continue holding a photo contest at the 4-H Fair. He mentioned that he thinks the photo contest is a great success and that the Board should set things up with 4-H earlier this year. Ken Langmesser made a motion to contact 4-H to do a photo contest for agriculture in St. Clair County with a \$75 first prize, \$50 second prize, and a \$25 third prize, to come from the Agricultural Preservation Board budget, Jim Hayes seconded, all in favor, motion passes unanimously.

c. 2008 Capital Improvement Program

Dave informed the Board that the Capital Improvement Program would be starting in April. He asked the Board to consider any changes it may want to make to its CIP request and to let him know. Dave noted that the Ag Board may want to begin being on the BOC's agenda a few times a year to give the County Board an update of what the Ag Board is up to. Ken said that by periodically updating the BOC, perhaps they would be willing to help the Ag Board with a small amount of funds.

9. Other Business

a. Staff Report

Dave said that everything in his staff report was covered earlier in the meeting.

b. Items for next Meeting

Ken asked about the status of the 2008 Fall Farm Tour. Jim Reid said he talked with the manager of Marysville Ethanol and there is a possibility of the Ethanol plant being one of the tour stops. Ken Langmesser said he would start asking others to participate as well. Other items for next meeting include more information regarding the donation of development rights, the Capital Improvement Program, and the cost changes for the newsletter.

c. Newspaper Articles (for information only)

There was no discussion of the newspaper articles.

10. Adjournment

Chuck Kwasnik made a motion to adjourn; Jim Hayes seconds; motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianna Seifert
Secretary