

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday January 15, 2009 3 p.m.

Conference Room B

200 Grand River Avenue, 2nd Floor, Port Huron, MI 48060

1. Call to Order

Chairman Jim Reid called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Chuck Kwasnik, Dianna Seifert, Sue Sniegocki, Jim Reid, Ken Langmesser, and Terry Gill

Excused: Jim Hayes

Absent: Rick Mills and Steve Simasko

Support Staff: Dave Struck

Chuck made a motion to keep Rick Mills on until his term ends regardless of attendance record, Ken seconds, motion passed unanimously. Dave Struck will call Rick to see if he is still interested in being on the board.

3. Election of Officers

Jim Reid made a motion to nominate Ken to be Chairman, Dianna seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Ken made a motion to keep Chuck as Vice-Chair, Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Sue made a motion to keep Dianna as Secretary, Chuck seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Ken assumed role of chair for the rest of the meeting.

4. Citizens Wishing to be Heard

Jim Nolan from the St. Clair County Farm Museum attended to explain the goals of the Farm Museum and their current situation. They have a \$20,000 budget, which includes \$5,000 worth of liability insurance; they lease the buildings from Parks and Recreation for \$3,000 which is worked off by being open to the public for 30 days per year at four hour increments; and plant and harvest approximately seven acres for public demonstration. Their goal is to purchase more historical equipment and to see agriculture kept an integral part of the County Park.

The Farm Museum group is disappointed that Mark Brochu cancelled the lease to a farmer who rented the rest of the fields at the County Park and who worked the ground for the Farm Museum group. Since then the Farm Museum contacted the County Commissioners and also presented their case to the County Park Advisory Committee. Now they need to conduct a presentation to Mark Brochu/Parks and Recreation.

Currently there are 65 tillable acres with a potential of 85. Our involvement will be to send a letter or inquiry to the County Park Advisory Committee asking to be put on their agenda to introduce ourselves and to see what can be done/or what we can do to support the agricultural history and continuance of active agriculture on the park's

property. Terry suggested to Jim to open the Museum during the Earth Fair. Ken would like to go to the next Advisory Committee meeting and asked Dave to draft a letter of intent from our board to the Advisory Committee. Ken would like to see the County Park Master Plan to include language supporting preservation of agricultural heritage, and then from there MSU could be contacted to see if interested in doing long term research plots at the park. The fields would have to be tilled first – maybe someone could donate field tile.

Judy Duncan, Wales Township Deputy Supervisor, was asked by her supervisor to attend our meeting. Judy said the Wales Township Board is interested in seeing the agricultural heritage preserved at the Park seeing they are building a historical village, along with preserving its heritage of being a Poor Farm and Medical Centre with interest in a community garden as well.

5. Approval of November 20, 2008 Minutes

Dianna made a motion to accept the November 20, 2008 minutes as presented, Jim Reid seconded, motion passed unanimously.

6. Communications

Motion by Sue to accept the communications as presented and seconded by Jim. The motion passed unanimously. All reappointment letters sent out; Jim, Ken, Chuck, Sue and Dianna all reappointed. Dave still needs a contact for the Corn Grower' Commission to send them a thank you letter.

7. Financial Report

Jim Reid received a check for \$200 from Michigan Milk Producer's Association which is not yet reflected in our budget putting our total funds available at \$5595.39. Sue made a motion to accept the financial report. Jim Reid seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ken wanted to know if the board wanted to pursue the grocery shopping bag idea for a fundraiser. We will postpone a decision until Dave can get numbers on what it will cost to produce them. Dianna has an idea for a logo. Dave will also find out if there is a company that makes them in America. (onebagatatime.com)

8. Old Business

a. Farm Museum at Goodells County Park

Mark Brochu arrived later in our meeting to share his thoughts on production agriculture on the tillable acreage at the County Park. His decision to cancel the lease to Grade A Farms was due to the property tax rules on renting out public property for profit.

The last County Park master plan update was in 2005 to which the Farm Museum group was invited to give their input, however they did not attend. Mark said that continuation of actively farming the tillable land is not incompatible with recreation, but felt that just renting out the land to a farmer was not the best use for public

benefit, and would like to see something more in the form of public demonstration, MSU experimentation and/or test plots which could alleviate the problem of property taxes. Another idea was to have the County Park do a demonstration and contract a farmer to do the work. Mark said that approximately \$10,000 are spent per year to upgrade/preserve the County Park farm buildings.

b. Newsletter Pricing Update

The quote was on page 13 of packet. There was discussion about going to an electronic form of newsletter, however Ken said we could lose a lot of readership of those who are not computer savvy even though it would cut our costs dramatically. Dianna suggested partnering our newsletter with another entity which also mails out a newsletter (Parks and Recreation, Soil Conservation District, 4H, etc.) to cut/share the costs of postage. Jim volunteered to contact the Soil Conservation District to see if they would be willing to cover the cost of our newsletter, and to let Ken know when their next meeting will be. Ken suggested keeping two mailings per year. It was decided to postpone a decision on the # of mailings per year and who to include in the mailings (20 acres versus 40 acres) until we see if we can gain more donations.

c. Conservation Easement Update

Kenosha Township approved the preservation easement on Chuck's farm, however the clerk has yet to fill out and file the paperwork. Chuck has left messages to see why the paperwork has not been processed as of yet. Ken wants to see an article about our first farm preserved in the next newsletter. Dave showed the lease agreement for Chuck's field to our board.

d. 2009 Fall Farm Tour

Ken brought a reusable grocery bag to the meeting to see if the board wanted to sell them for a fundraiser. The bags could be sold at the various farmers' markets. This will be decided on after we find out the cost to produce the bags and what we would sell them for; Dave will look into pricing.

In choosing a part of the county to have the next Fall Farm Tour, we always like to include a dairy farm because it does have a big draw. If we go with the Capac area, Stevers have a nice dairy farm. Because of a lot of changes to Jim Reid's dairy farm, Jim offered his farm again for the tour and explained that McCallum's Orchard will include wine tasting for 2009 which could be a possibility. The tour could be expanded to include restaurants as well – Michigan Farm Menu items and promote with coupons. Dianna suggested encompassing more of the county before we repeat farms.

The Farm Bureau needs to be updated on our activities – Ken wants to know when the next meeting will be and wants to go to the next meeting with Jim. First step is to see if these other groups want to participate and plan the details of the Fall Farm Tour from there. Dianna suggested having a February meeting to work on the Fall Farm Tour otherwise things will not get accomplished.

The Committee decided not to participate in the International Rotary Parade this year, but to put all our efforts on the Fall Farm Tour. Having a Fall Farm Tour subcommittee was suggested; Jim Reid volunteered to be on this subcommittee. Date for the Fall Farm Tour will be on October 10, 2009.

9. New Business

Covered.

10. Other Business

a. Staff Report

Covered.

b. Items for next meeting.

Revisit grocery bag. Update on interest from other groups in helping with the Fall Farm Tour.

c. Newspaper Articles

In packet.

11. Adjournment

Dianna made a motion to adjourn, Jim Reid seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianna Seifert
Secretary