



## **Webster Township Farmland & Open Space Preservation Board Regular Meeting January 7, 2008**

The Webster Township Farmland & Open Space Preservation Board was called to order at 7:04 pm, by Chairman Rob Mitzel on January 7, 2008 at the township hall, 5665 Webster Church Road Dexter, MI 48130.

Members present: Rob Mitzel, John Westman, Jean Cares, Erica Perry, Tom Bloomer, consultant Barry Lonik, and Recording Secretary Cyndi Zuccaro.

Also present from the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC): Kris Olsson.

### **Approve Minutes**

Motion Tom second Erica to approve the corrected minutes of the Regular meeting January 7, 2008. All ayes and carried.

### **Huron River Watershed Council Bio-Reserve presentation**

Kris Olsson addressed the board outlining a new project from the HRWC, "The Bioreserve Project". The ultimate goal of the project is to preserve high quality natural areas within the Huron Watershed and work to protect these areas in local master plans and other strategies. The first steps they are focusing on are a Bioreserve Map, highlighting the remaining natural areas in the watershed, and a Rapid Field Assessment to further determine the ecological quality of natural areas. They need volunteers to perform the Rapid Field Assessment and will have training sessions for those interested. The training involves learning to identify high-quality areas that will require a further detailed inventory. There is a training session for interested volunteers scheduled for May 10, 2008. If there were enough interest individuals in Webster Township or other communities, the HRWC would be willing to have additional training sessions specifically for each community.

### **Announcements and Public Comment**

No announcements or comments.

### **Old Business**

#### **Project Status Updates:**

#### **I. Gordon Hall**

It was unclear if the BOT will be addressing the Gordon Hall Project at the January 22, 2008 meeting, there is no agenda at this time.

#### **II. Smyth Property**

The BOT approved expenditures for a survey and environmental assessment. It is expected these services will be conducted during the month of January. The Greenbelt Commission approved its share of the remaining cost for the easement. Barry will be drafting the easement.

#### **III. Merkel Property**

The appraiser refused to revise his report for the federal government. The city is commissioning another appraisal.

## **New Business**

### **I. Updates on state agricultural board meeting / federal & state programs**

Tom and Barry attended the Agriculture Preserve Boards of Michigan conference: "Investing in Farmland Protection". Currently, there are no funds for a state PDR program. There was discussion at the conference of legislation offering landowners, with P.A. 116 leans, an opportunity where the state would accept 90% payment of the lien. This program would be for a specific period of time and after that time period the debt would start to incur interest.

In the Federal government both the House and Senate passed Farm Bills. Committees will review both bills and make recommendations. There is the possibility that the federal government will fund grants to state programs, rather than local projects as is currently the practice.

### **II. Greenbelt updates**

Tom will attend the next Greenbelt meeting January 9, 2008. There has been ongoing discussion on the current depressed real estate market and property values, the Greenbelt wants to be cautious not to over-spend on land that is purchased through their program.

### **III. Update on inter-township preservation cooperation**

Rob attended the inter-township preservation cooperation meeting December 13, 2007.

The group included Webster, Scio, Ann Arbor, and Pittsfield townships.

They discussed the pro's and con's of forming an intergovernmental cooperation when applying to the state PDR program. An intergovernmental cooperation would increase scoring for the state PDR program by 100 points, but the criteria is very complex and there may be better ways to raise our score without giving up some control.

The group also discussed promoting "buy local", to encourage support of our local farms. Tom suggested that another project the four townships could work on would be to brainstorm ideas to fund the state farmland preservation program and then lobby their legislators.

The group will meet again at the end of January and Rob plans on attending.

### **Close open Session – Open Closed Session**

8:35pm, motion Tom second Erica to close the open session and open the closed session. Roll call, all ayes, motion carried unanimously.

### **Re-open Open Session**

Chairman Rob Mitzel re-opened the open session at 9:08pm.

Erica stated that she would like to see Webster Township contribute to the efforts of the HRWC's Bioreserve Project. Making the Bioreserve Map available to the public was discussed along with the idea of posting the project on the township web site.

A few board members felt this was outside of the board's realm and that it should be up to each individual if they choose to volunteer for the project.

### **Adjourn**

Motion John second Tom to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:23pm. All ayes, motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Erica Perry

