

Bridgewater Farmland Preservation Board Meeting August 21

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Start at 18:34

II. Roll Call

Present: Long, Scaturro, McQueer, Faust

Absent: Howard

III. Citizen Participation

None.

IV. Review and Approve Agenda

Request from McQueer to rearrange agenda to move presentations ahead of approving the minutes.

Scaturro moves, McQueer seconds.

V. Presentations/Reports

A. Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation (WCPARC)

-Ginny Trocchio is Parks Superintendent at WCPARC

-Rosie Paul-Donaldson is a parks planner

-Review of conservation easements generally:

 Stays on the tax roll even after protected

 Land remains in private ownership

 Landowner can continue current activities on the land

-Aim is to limit non-agricultural use

-Protects viability of agricultural lands by:

 Reducing farm fragmentation

 Limits impervious surface

 Maintains rural character

-Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP)

 Established in August of 2000.

 It is a county program that was delegated to the WCPARC to manage

NAPP is funded by a .25 mil voters passed in November 2000

Renewed in 2010 for 10 years

Mileage will generate approximately \$3.6m in 2017

- Review of NAPP timeline
- Own 35 nature preserves
- 18 conservation easements on natural areas
- 12 conservation easements on farms (1,500 acres)
- Stewardship of all lands owned as preserves
- Timeline for completing projects varies by source of funding and complexity of project
- Deal structures can vary if there is partnership with a local conservancy or other government entity.
- Question from Scaturo on perpetuity and the limits of conservation easements, and the rule of perpetuities is discussed regarding re recording of conservation easements interests by conservancies and government agencies.
- Doug Koop of Legacy Land Conservancy discusses the age of most Michigan easements, and explains why no easement has been rerecorded as of yet, because no conservancy has easements older than 40 years old, but soon rerecording will be necessary.
- NAPP has undergone a deliberate process to identify the most important lands to protect and preserve. They have mapped these priorities to evaluate ecological diversity, heritage, etc., and protecting land that compliments and enhances already protected lands to maximize public benefit.
- The Natural Areas Technical Advisory Committee and Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee advised when park planners were working on developing criteria for these priorities.
- There is one prioritization for natural areas and one prioritization for farmland.
- Each parcel is scored and given a value -- highest values are the most important.
- If want more information on criteria for scoring please contact a representative from the farmland preservation board and they will get a detailed list from WCPARC
- Rosie-Paul Donaldson explains in-depth how the prioritization was done for both natural areas and farmland across the county, and what it means to ground-truth these areas as high or medium quality lands.
- The prioritization looks at potential for creating corridors, patch expansion, new patch establishment and special ecoregion focuses.
- Scaturo asks when outreach from the WCPARC can be expected in our area, and WCPARC explains that they are in the early stages of collaborating with townships and local municipalities on vetting the county-wide priorities. McQueer adds that local knowledge of our local lands is an untapped resource that WCPARC could use to ground-truth some of these priorities.

B. Legacy Land Conservancy (Legacy)

-Doug Koop from Legacy Land Conservancy now presents on the organization's work. It is noted that Legacy offers many of the same programs and services as WCAPRC. Legacy has funds attached to each conservation easement that are used to monitor and enforce the terms of the agreement. Legacy has relied on conservation easement donations from landowners across its history, and writes easements that make strong cases for public benefit which substantiate public benefit for the IRS so the landowner can claim a tax deduction.

-Doug Koop notes that this township and county are unique in the state of Michigan, because there are not many local governments leveraging millages for raising fund to protect lands. In that way, we are fortunate to be in this area.

C. Planning Commission

-Dave Horning now presents representing the township planning commission. Dave explains that this township is not equipped to run the analysis for planning and scoring like WCPARC because the township does not have the same resources. Most of the township master plan is information gleaned from other organizations like Washtenaw County and the federal government, like the NRCS and USDA.

-Township is focused on preserving active agriculture, first and foremost, and prime agricultural soils next. The Township is also focused on protecting larger parcels (20+). Response to last master plan's focus on maintaining the township's rural character was overwhelmingly positive.

-There may be some chance that WCPARC's prioritization for farmland preservation could be adopted by a future township master plan. Ginny from WCPARC notes that the board should check what the requirements are for having a designated agricultural preservation district in the master plan to qualify for certain state and federal funding. Although this may not stop the township from having a farmland preservation district and a separate set of priorities within that district.

-Question of when the next update to the master plan will take place.

VI. Old Business

Motion by McQueer to approve May/June meeting minutes, seconded by Scaturo.

VII. Discussion

Held until next meeting.

VIII. Citizen Participation

None.

IX. Next Meeting

September 18th 2017.

X. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by McQueer, and seconded by Faust.

APPROVED