

**Van Buren County Farmland Preservation Board**  
**August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007**  
**Administration and Land Services Building**  
**219 Paw Paw St., Paw Paw**  
**6:30 pm**

**Minutes**

**Regular Meeting**

Call to order 6:30 pm

**Present:** Bill Lawson, Jeff Radtke, Mike Pioch, Bill Mihelich, Scott Cedarquist, Laura Strehlow, Tom Erdman, Dave Foerster, Wayne Hammond, Ted Major, Don Mackellar, Ryan Miller

**Absent:** Mike Thiel

**Public:** Charles Lachman

**Agenda:** Approved (Motion by Jeff Radtke)

Minutes of July 12<sup>th</sup> Approved (Motion by Scott Cedarquist)

**Public Comment:** Charles Lachman noted that he has noticed a positive response about the farmland preservation program from various people he has spoken with.

**Reports:**

*County Commissioner* – Tom Erdmann reported that South Haven Township’s parks department was interested in helping promote the farmland preservation program. He also talked more about North Point property and the discussions that South Haven Township had about it.

*Township Representatives* – Wayne Hammond noted that the Columbia Township supervisor is anxious to include farmland preservation. They had also requested an application and some literature including working from other townships that have included it in their master plans.

Ted Major reported that Almena is working on including farmland preservation in their master plan and that Antwerp is on board.

*Planning Commission Representative* – Scott Cedarquist noted that there was a new member of the Planning Commission approved recently after the resignation of another member. He also noted that there was discussion on how to fund the LPB program including PA 116 payments. Cedarquist talked about a bill that will go after PA 116 money from early-terminated agreements. There was also talk about there being 2 grant periods in 2008 with one in January and one in July. Cedarquist also noted that Chuck Eckenstahler will be staging a retirement through a systematic, multi-year transfer of work to McKenna.

*Other Local Visits* – Ted Major mentioned that the Farm Bureau is holding an event at Hood Farms on Monday September 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm where there will be food and drinks.

**Old Business:**

*Lachman Update* – Ryan Miller reported that he and Mr. Lachman met with Brian Thomas from the USDA on Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> of August at the Lachman property. The three of them walked

the property and exchanged questions as to the history and current status of the farm. Miller explained that the visit was a formality and that it was necessary to make sure that what was described in the baseline report was actually there. Miller also explained that he was waiting on lawyers in Washington DC to review and approve the easement deed.

*Application Cycle Update* – Miller explained that he has received one completed application from Gary and Judith Jones of Paw Paw Township. The Paw Paw Township Board has reviewed and formally approved the application in their last meeting on July 12<sup>th</sup>. Miller also noted that a landowner from Pine Grove Township named Bob Koehn had recently decided that he would like to wait until next year to apply for the program.

**New Business:**

*Dave Foerster letter to the BOC* – A letter written to the Board of Commissioners by Dave Foerster was passed out at the meeting. The letter addressed the opposition of the sale of the North Point property in South Haven Township. The letter also mentioned the resolution passed by the Farmland Preservation Board which supports the preservation of the land.

*Funding Options for the LPB* – Dave Foerster spoke of the meeting he had with Doug Cultra, Ed VanderVries, and Ryan Miller. The group talked about different ways to fund the farmland preservation program in light of the recent budget problems. Foerster brought up the possibility of an application fee to be charged when a landowner applies to the program.

*Tax Millage* – There was also a lengthy discussion of different options in terms of a tax millage. Foerster educated the board about the Heldey Fund and the 1978 general operating millage of 5.2 mills. He noted that there could be a petition put together to reinstate the millage to help fund different departments of the county including building improvement, parks, social services, jail, farmland preservation, ect.

Laura Strehlow noted that the Harvest Dinners were going to be held in September at Kirkland Farms.

Ted Major mentioned that there may be a funding opportunity with the Kellogg Foundation

Tom Erdmann noted that there also may be a donation opportunity with the local Potawatomi group.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be **October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007** at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Floor of the Administration and Land Services Building 219 Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 7:45 pm  
Submitted by Ryan Miller