

Commissioners approve easement at county's Northpoint property

By Deborah Klinger

Despite some public concerns, commissioners approved a Conservation Easement for the Northpoint property in South Haven.

Over the past two years, the county has been working with a citizens group, the Friends of Northpoint, and other interested parties, on preparing an easement to protect the 17 acres of pristine woods located along the shores of Lake Michigan. Commissioners heard concerns regarding the easement's allowance for a single family dwelling on the property, which some thought may set the stage for unrestricted conveyance of the property for private conveyance, forestry rights, and that there is no restriction on the sale of the property.

Dave Foerster, who served on the Northpoint Committee, voiced several concerns. He felt the conservation easement was finalized and approved by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy with concurrence by the County Attorney without benefit of his committee's review.

"This easement was not crafted in the spirit of the Friends of Northpoint, who wanted this land to be protected forever and remain open to the public," Foerster commented. "In my opinion it is not meeting their intent."

"It is my belief we are," responded Commission chair Christopher Randall.

"I think the language is perfectly okay. The Land Conservancy approved it, and I am satisfied with it," said Commissioner Tom Erdmann.

Commissioners were given the option to approve the easement as written or return it for changes or modifications. Commissioners, with a five to two vote, approved the easement as written with Commissioners Mike Toth and Randall voting no.