



**ACME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
ACME TOWNSHIP HALL
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690
7:00 p.m. Thursday, September 15, 2005**

Called to Order 7:03 p.m.

- Members present:** O. Sherberneau (Chair), B. Carstens, C. David, R. Hardin, D. Krause, D. Morgan, J. Pulcifer, E. Takayama, M. Vermetten
- Members excused:** None
- Staff present:** S. Corpe, Recording Secretary/Office & Planning Coordinator
B. Bourdages, Farmland Protection Specialist, G.T. Regional Land Conservancy
M. McDonough, G.T. Regional Land Conservancy

INQUIRY AS TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Pulcifer posed the question as to whether he would be deemed to have a conflict of interest. Hardin felt that this would not be the case, as the discussion this evening will not substantially effect Pulcifer’s decision whether or not to participate in the program. Vermetten noted that the need to remove oneself from the discussion revolves around whether the individual stands to gain financially from the situation. David stated that if the outcome of the evening is to decide to apply to a grant program for which Pulcifer might be eligible, there could be gain accruing to him. There being consensus that it would be generally safer to take a conservative approach, Pulcifer recused himself from deliberations and joined the general public.

1. Limited Public Comment:

Dan Hanna, 7239 Lautner Road stated that he hopes that the evening will be conducted in a give-and-take format, allowing the public to ask questions and comment as discussion occurs. Sherberneau replied that his plan to provide structure for the evening is to begin by introducing the people from the G.T. Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) and allow them to provide an overview, and then receive public comment prior to any Commission deliberation. He agreed to allow for questions to be raised by the public during the Commission discussion portion of the proceedings.

2. Public Hearing:

- a) **Proposed Amendment to Acme Township Master Plan Agricultural & Rural Preservation Section:** (In attached file proposed additions to existing text are represented by yellow highlighted areas, and the proposed Agricultural Preserve Zone Map is a proposed addition. On the documents there are written notes representing changes suggested by the Grand Traverse County Planning Commission): Brian Bourdages, Farmland Preservation Specialist introduced himself and his role in facilitating applications to and the process of having interested farmers apply to a farmland preservation program. He also introduced Matt McDonough from the GTRLC, and spoke about how the proposed Agricultural Preserve Zone map for inclusion into the Master Plan was developed.

Aerial photographs taken of the township in 2003 were used to identify areas of the township that appeared to meet the Department of Agriculture’s definition of farmland for which preservation grants can be obtained. Mr. McDonough’s goal in producing the map was to be as inclusive as possible. The map was first presented to the Commission several months ago, at which time audience concerns about the accuracy of the map were raised. The map was subsequently reviewed by individuals from the township that are more intimately familiar with the character of land use in

the township, resulting in removal of some parcels from the proposed zone and inclusion of several others.

Mr. Bourdages reported that the goal in producing the map was to be eligible to apply for state grant funding during the Fall 2005 grant cycle. The deadline for having the map in the master plan to be eligible for this cycle passed a few weeks ago, so the goal is now to be ready for subsequent grant cycles as soon as possible. Based on past history, a federal grant funding cycle is expected to occur in mid-winter.

Peninsula Township's preservation of development rights (PDR) is currently eligible for grant funding because they already have a farmland preservation map in their Master Plan. Mr. Bourdages hopes that as with Peninsula Township, a map will be included in Acme's Master Plan that indicates areas of farmland which the township believes are valuable to preserve if the landowners would voluntarily like to participate in the program.

Mr. McDonough reported that the map is just one component of the elements required to be eligible to apply for grants. Also needed is text that expresses a range of tools the township plans to implement to make farmland preservation a reality, and this already exists in the Master Plan. Some additional visioning text is proposed to be added and highlighted in yellow in the meeting materials that comes largely from the state grant program materials themselves.

Sherberneau spoke briefly with Nels Veliquette earlier, and it is his understanding that the township would not be precluded from applying for grants to fund PDR on lands not within the boundaries of an agricultural preserve zone. Mr. Bourdages confirmed this. He also noted that there are changes occurring in the grant programs. Previously, a grant application was made by individual property owners with assistance from the GTRLC and indications of support from their municipalities for a particular parcel of land. Going forward the state is seeking to encourage municipalities to set up and operate their own localized programs, so funds will be given to program operators with use at their discretion, subject to some description of the intent for how the funds would be used. Mr. Bourdages sees this as beneficial, since decision-makers in Lansing are not likely to be as well versed in local desires and needs as local groups. Also, the statewide scoring system was heavily weighted towards row crop farming and soil conditions rather than the needs and lands that work for stone fruit farming, which made applications difficult for Northern Michigan.

Hardin noted that an election was held on a farmland preservation millage request. People beyond farmers participated in the vote, and the Commission is not representative of the farming community. He asked what the farming community does think about the program. Mr. Bourdages did not feel he could speak for them, but noted that quite a few local farmers such as Denny Hoxsie and Rick Sayler are actively involved in setting up the program. Hardin asked if any Acme farmers are taking advantage of the program, or if it is too early. Mr. McDonough stated that Acme's program is very new, but in Peninsula Township where the program is more established, many farmers have participated, placing approximately 4,000 acres of land under conservation status. Mr. Bourdages believes that the real problem will be to find enough financial resources to acquire all of the development rights Acme farmers wish to sell.

Carstens asked about the status of farmland preservation in neighboring counties. Benzie County has a farmland protection ordinance but no funding mechanism or

PDR program. Leelanau County efforts in this direction have been and continue to be the subject of debate and are not fully implemented. Carstens also noted that some of the land suggested for inclusion in the zone has recently been purchased for residential development by LochenHeath. Mr. McDonough responded that he made the best suggestions he could based on the 2003 aerial photos, and at that time the property was a cherry orchard. Mr. Bourdages amplified that it is very appropriate for the township to bring its specialized knowledge of which properties are developing or likely to develop to bear in the form of map amendments. Land that is subject to development is a poor candidate for potential preservation, and the map should, in his opinion, represent a relatively broad but accurate depiction of land likely to be and desirable for continued agricultural use.

Hardin asked what happens when a landowner makes a choice to participate in a PDR program. Mr. Bourdages replied that a landowner chooses whether to participate and if which particular pieces of land should be in the program. Conservation easements placed on this type of property differ in some ways to those placed on properties for environmental conservation. Farmland conservation easements generally allow land uses that are related to agriculture including some limited residential use and industrial uses directly related to farming operations.

Sherberneau noted that there is still some land shown in the proposed preserve zone that is clearly not suitable for inclusion, such as the land purchased by LochenHeath. He asked when a more correct map would be available. Mr. McDonough replied that the map will be “dynamic” over time, changing as the community’s needs and desires change. It would not need changing every time land use changes within the boundaries, but it should be updated from time to time. Krause suggested that it be reviewed and updated every January. Corpe noted that amendments to the map constitute Master Plan amendments that would be subject to a minimum 4 month-long process.

Vermetten stated that it is important for any map generated to be as accurate as possible at the time it is generated, and indicate on its face when it was generated. He asked what the deadline will be for having the map in place in time for the next grant application cycle. Mr. Bourdages replied that the next grant cycle date has not been firmly set, but a federal cycle is likely to occur in early spring. By that time all elements required for state grant application should be in place, as the federal government seems to be employing the state standards. Vermetten was encouraged to hear that there is some time available to prepare for a spring federal grant cycle and to be ready for a Fall 2006 state cycle.

Mr. Bourdages noted that the GTRLC has good working relationships with the state and federal contacts for the grant programs. He believes that it is important to ensure that the map reflects what the farming community believes are viable lands for continuation of business operations of an agricultural nature and that will encourage them to participate in the program. Vermetten suggested that many members of the farming community are present this evening and can be consulted and relied upon to create just such a map.

Nels Veliquette stated that one important factor to farmers is a clear understanding of the practical definition of “development.” Division of what was formerly a larger parcel on Brackett Road into 5-acre homesites with a developed roadway would seem to exclude that parcel of land from the category of agricultural production. The land use may be residential, but it is non-agribusiness land.

Dan Hanna pointed to the property Mr. Veliquette referred to, which he owned, has divided for residential use and which he considers residential land. He noted a parcel of land to the north that was not included in the map when the properties surrounding it were included. Corpe reported that this property belongs to Bob Garvey, the Farmland Preservation Advisory Chair, who couldn't attend this evening but he asked that if this subject came up that certain information be conveyed. Mr. Garvey was surprised to see his property omitted when he first saw the map. He was disappointed, but let it stand out of concern that including his property could lead to perceived conflict of interest or claims that he was trying to attract taxpayer dollars to the purchase of his development rights. Mr. Garvey told Corpe that he would be very pleased to see his land included in the preservation zone if the public would not object.

Vermetten asked if there is something about the scoring criteria that makes it necessary to have a certain minimum number of acres or percentage of land area designated for preservation; Mr. McDonough replied that this is not the case. The community need only indicate a clear desire to preserve some land. The question of why some of the land at Maple Bay is included in the proposed zone and some not; Maple Bay Farms has already been placed under conservation easement so it would be redundant and inaccurate to include it again. Carstens asked for clarification as to whether the point scoring system for state grant applications addresses contains weighting for the amount/percentage of land considered desirable for protection by the community; the scoring system does address this but doesn't place minimum requirements.

Hardin asked if he understands correctly that the map is likely to change over time and during regular Master Plan updates as required at least every 5 years by law. This is the case.

Public Hearing opened at 7:59 p.m.

John Pulcifer asked if there are limits on how much a farmer would be paid per acre for his development rights. Mr. McDonough stated that this has yet to be determined by the County Agricultural Board, which will administer the process and scoring system. Mr. Bourdages reported that grant funding can only be used for up to \$5,000/acre. This does not limit the potential price per acre, it just means more local match would be required.

Mr. Pulcifer asked how PDR values would be appraised. In Peninsula Township many of the appraisals have been performed by Jack Burns from Terra Field Services. They have looked at other preserved lands for comparable sales information. Mr. Pulcifer stated that he has considered working with the GTRLC before, and in those cases the Conservancy has chosen the appraiser. It has been his experience that an appraiser comes back with a valuation most favorable for the side of the potential transaction that hired him, and asked if it would be possible for farmers to make the choice of who to use. Mr. Bourdages reported that in most cases the purchaser contracts for the appraisal, but the landowner is entitled by the rules of the system to pay for their own appraisal if he disagrees. Once multiple appraisals are in hand the parties can negotiate to an mutually acceptable valuation. In Peninsula Township there is a median development right acquisition value that is constantly adjusted based on ongoing transactions. Their program permits their Board to refuse to purchase development rights that are priced above the median.

Mr. Pulcifer asked if inclusion in the agricultural preserve zone map, which in turn

would be included in the Master Plan, would mean that if a farmer whose land is in the zone chooses to stop farming and sell for development, such development might be denied by the Planning Commission based on the map. Carstens stated that when the Commission agreed to move forward with considering adoption of the map, it was clearly stated that it was not a zoning map or to be used for zoning purposes. **Corpe offered the thought.** Vermetten concurred that if a farmer decided to wait 12 years and then request a rezoning, if their property is within the proposed zone there is some likelihood that the Commissioners at that time will view the map as an indication that the rezoning request should be denied.

Mr. Hanna echoed this line of discussion, saying that in this opinion exactly this type of situation is already occurring. There has been debate over whether or not the Town Center Report in the Master Plan says there should or shouldn't be Meijer. He would be more comfortable if some guarantee was made that land within the agricultural preserve zone will never be downzoned to decrease or eliminate any development potential.

Ken Engle asked if the map is computerized, and Mr. McDonough replied that it is. Mr. Engle noted that it was difficult for the farmers to work on the map over the summer during their busy growing and harvest seasons. He also believes that there are properties that may not be currently shown on the map but perhaps should be: lands that have been or currently are in the PA 116 program. There should also be a way to demonstrate lands that are conserved and under active agricultural production, and a way to indicate lands that have conservation easements on them for environmental reasons. For instance, both he and Rick Sayler have wetlands areas that are under conservation easements that prevent both development and active agriculture. An additional problem is a current state definition regarding woodlots. If a farmer owns a woodlot that is contiguous to land in agricultural operation in the same parcel of land, it receives an agricultural exemption. If the woodlot is not contiguous to the crop, or if it is contiguous but is on a separate parcel of land, it is taxed as residential property rather than as agricultural land. It makes no sense, and may not be a problem that can be solved locally, but it is a problem.

Mr. McDonough stated that one potential approach would be to contact all landowners whose land appears to meet the state's definition of farmland eligible for grant funding, and include or exclude the parcels from the zone map as the landowner desires. Mr. Bourdages recommends that woodlots be included in the preservation areas where they are mixed in with production lands because they are valuable for buffering, air drainage, and scenery.

Mr. Engle commented on the fragmentation of the agricultural community that has already occurred. He noted the Tobeco Creek Estates development off Bates Road where the land was divided up into 5 acre or larger parcels. Mr. Bourdages characterized such situations as "rural sprawl."

Suggestions were discussed for making the map more readable by changing the format of the graphics somewhat, and about making it more informational by indicating lands that have already been preserved. The Commission indicated that it would favor having the GTRLC representatives working with the farming community to refine the map.

Margy Goss stated a belief that to date matching funds for development rights acquisition has come primarily from private foundation sources. She is concerned about the "fine print" that could come from working with state and federal

governmental programs, and particularly on the impact not on the preserved property but on the adjacent properties. She notes that the wording of the Master Plan recognizes that active agriculture and residential uses side by side are not compatible. Mr. Bourdages reported that northern Michigan has actually been the primary recipient of federal and state funds, and that Peninsula Township for a long time was the only entity that was qualified to receive the funds. Combinations of state, federal and private funding sources have been used. Peninsula Township has received federal funding in excess of \$2 million to assist in the acquisition of 16 different parcels, and in no case did the deal impose any restrictions on neighboring parcels. Mr. Bourdages further expressed the idea that right now, farmers are hampered as landowners because they have only two options; farming or residential development. It could be viewed that by providing a third option of selling development rights, individual property rights are being enhanced.

A recess was declared from 8:30 to 8:42 p.m.

Rick Sayler stated that a Farmland Preservation Advisory group is already in place that would be very willing to work with Messrs. Bourdages and McDonough to refine the map. He said there is another rudimentary map that the members of the advisory used for discussion purposes. Mr. Bourdages is eager to work closely with the advisory going forward. Sherberneau asked if a revised map could be presented at the October 24 meeting, and it was agreed that this was an achievable goal. The map will include color-coded indications of areas already under conservation easement.

David asked for a reminder of the criteria being used to develop the map, being sensitive to concerns raised by the public about potential negative impacts to the range of future land use options. He is having trouble understanding the goal and how decisions have been made to date, and feels that using state criteria is not necessarily the best guiding principle for the township. The point is to identify actively farmed land; the existing map sought to include all possible land fitting this description. The job now is to refine and more accurately define how land is being used in the township. David asked about land that is not currently in active agriculture but be placed in production. Mr. Bourdages stated that the definition encompasses land that is at least 51% in agricultural production. Mr. Veliquette believes that 85% of the land identified is in active production.

Mr. Sayler stated that the purpose of the program is to preserve good farmland, but not marginal farmland. It would be safe to presume that if it is currently being farmed it is good farmland. There may also be land that isn't being farmed that would be good farmland, but it is unlikely that it would be returned to production. He does not believe it would be in the best interests of the taxpayers to include marginal farmland.

Mr. Engle raised the question of whether there might be zoning changes in the township dealing with setbacks or similar issues. His concern comes when his farmland abuts non-farmland. It becomes a challenge for him to continue to farm in keeping with generally accepted agricultural management practices (GAAMPS). Historically, where there is development next to agriculture, the agriculture eventually dies off. Mr. Bourdages stated that in his experience working on farmland protection in Leelanau County the number one concern was this type of land use conflict. When people move into farm areas there is a statement on their deed that they will be subjected to the active aspects of farming, but the people who choose this lifestyle generally don't realize that this includes odors and orchard spraying in the wee hours of the morning. It is important for farmers to work with their municipalities to keep the environment friendly to their businesses and minimizing

the threat of lawsuits. Sherberneau feels that Acme Township has traditionally worked hard to work with the farmers, and Denny Hoxsie concurs. Mr. Engle experiences a lot of trespassing on his land, but there are dangers and liability issues such as the case this summer when two young girls were using 4-wheelers in his orchard right after spraying had occurred. Vermetten stated that where case law used to favor the farmer and say that residents moving in should have realized what they bargained for, now sometimes there are cases where the farm is treated as an attractive nuisance. Mr. Engle asked what happens to a farmer whose land is at the edge of the farm area and abuts a subdivision? How can the township work to craft requirements to help farming operations remain viable? Are you locked into agriculture if you want to sell your land?

Mr. Pulcifer stated that having development surround him introduces unexpected stresses and a nearly overwhelming number of issues. Hardin stated that this line of discussion speaks back to his questions about how the farmers view the program. He is hearing that there is disagreement in the Acme farming community as to how best to use the PDR tool. Non-farmers benefit from having farms around, but when one farmer is done farming and sells for development, impacts are introduced on the next farmer down the road, and a domino effect occurs. If that next farmer has sold his development rights already, then he's out of options. He can't sell for development, and it's unlikely another farmer will purchase the land because he knows what's in store from the residential neighbors. To him, it is important that the farming community be in agreement. Mr. Pulcifer stated that this is why it is important for large contiguous blocks for preservation to be identified. Mr. Veliquette stated that it is all about achieving critical mass. Someone has to be brave enough to be the first to apply, and when their success is perceived then others will follow. It's possible that nobody will every apply, but unlikely. Momentum will increase.

Mr. Veliquette also spoke to the fears regarding downzoning, and pointed out that the Master Plan already calls for imposing and maintaining limits on the level of residential development possible in the agricultural areas.

Hardin believes that over time it will become harder and harder to implement a PDR program. As there is less farmland to be preserved, prices per acre will rise and it will become harder to acquire the land. Mr. McDonough noted that the Farmland Preservation Advisory invited Gordon Hayward and a Peninsula Township farmer who has used their PDR program to come speak about how the program has worked in their community so well, and perhaps it would be beneficial to invite them back again for further discussion. Mr. Bourdages feels that realizing that this is a tool is important. It won't absolutely guarantee a perpetual environment that will nurture agri-business, but it can be a valuable and productive tool. When he first began working in farmland preservation he toured Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey where PDR programs have been in place for over 20 years to see how they were doing. He found in those communities that protected land is still being farmed. In some cases it has changed hands but is still being farmed, and farmers will buy land from other farmers at a premium to continue agri-business. He had heard them say that when their land was on the perimeter of a protected area they felt somewhat fearful that development would abut them, but then the next fellow down the road would buy into the program and he would feel more secure as he became more insulated.

Hardin stated that he is having trouble understanding the benefits and motivations that would drive a farmer to use the program. Mr. Veliquette stated that every farmer will have a different motivation, and that it is very difficult to decide to be the first to

try it out. You know that you will get a lower price for your land than those who come after you. He has found that people he never expected would go in for participation in a PDR program with their land are suddenly talking enthusiastically about the potential to participate in Acme's program. Farmers in Peninsula who sold their development rights early are continuing to acquire other properties under conservation and expanding their agricultural businesses.

Jim Gurr, Antrim County, stated that one component that has not been addressed is the effect on the taxpayer. He is opposed to the program as it is currently constituted and would resist anything that might limit his decision-making ability over his property. He is an elected official in his own community. People in the general community tend to make demands on the agricultural community on what farmers should do with their land, and he only sees it getting worse when their tax dollars are paying for the program. He has heard some "horror stories" about goings on in Peninsula Township. Traditionally a farmer has had the option of selling some land to fund continued operations – "cutting off the little finger to save the arm."

Mr. Engle asked what sort of funding the Acme millage is expected to raise. In the first year it raised about \$250,000 and will raise about a similar amount this year. The rate of annual increases is difficult to predict because of the way Proposal A functions to cap taxable values while land is held and uncaps them when land is sold. In general the figure of about \$2.5 million to be raised through the millage over its 10-year life is predicted. Mr. Engle asked how much grant funding is likely to be attracted; this again is unpredictable but Mr. Bourdage is hopeful that around \$5 million can be attracted. Ironically, it is funding that comes from development/destruction of agricultural land that provides the source for the grant funds.

Dorrance Amos, who owns farmland in Acme Township noted that some of the lands on the map, such as Denny Hosxie's land on the south side of M-72 or John Pulcifer's land on the west side of US 31 are unlikely to be preserved. They are along transportation corridors and increasingly surrounded by development; therefore they will likely score poorly compared to other properties even though they may be very good for cherry farming due to the topography and environment. It is important to look at areas where the heavier levels of farming are occurring such as along the Saylor Road corridor and where blocks of contiguous farms can be preserved to help protect one another. Once the nucleus is established the program may reach out from there. But not all current farmland is suitable for long-term preservation. This exercise will also lead to a more realistic look at what areas should truly be zoned agricultural, which should be defined as other open space areas, and which should be zoned for residential use.

Dan Rosa is relatively neutral regarding the farmland preservation issue. He asked how many different farmers are there that own all of the land in the proposed zone? Are all the landowners in the potentially affected area aware of what's going on? What do they think? Is this another case of 1% of the people making the decisions for the other 98% He also finds much of the proposed language for addition to the master plan is "laughable." He questioned the use of the word "unique" to describe our farmland: is this truly the only place where apples and cherries can grow well in the world? The language reads to him like an advertisement or travelogue and not like a realistic description of the township. Why is there a mention of hunting in this section? Would this encourage hunting on private farmland in a way that is annoying or dangerous to the farmer? Mr. Veliquette feels that Mr. Rosa took the word "unique" out of context, and that reading the whole sentence it says – and properly –

that the land in Acme Township supports cherry farming in a way that is unique on a global basis. Mr. Veliquette asked if Mr. Rosa feels that Acme Township is a unique place; Mr. Rosa replied that he feels that Acme is more similar to places like Elmwood and Garfield Townships or Manistee County, both in general and in terms of farming, than it is dissimilar. He has no problem with farming and believes it is good for our economy, but not everyone in Acme Township will be a farmer. Mr. Veliquette objected to Mr. Rosa's apparent characterization that the proposed map or text attempt to or will take away the property rights of general citizens of the community.

Noelle Knopf, 5795 US 31 North, focused on the statement made that in general good farmland is being farmed and poor farmland is not. She asked if the people who created the map have visited all the parcels to see if they are being farmed or not; Mr. McDonough stated that this was not done. Ms. Knopf also noted that the commentary to how the map was created stated that it was based in part on the Tart Cherry Site Inventory Map. She had a copy of the map and stated that some of the properties proposed to be in the preserve zone are in areas that do not appear to have good soils for agricultural production, and it would be well to review carefully and ensure that land to be preserved meshes with this map. Mr. McDonough clarified that he did not use this map to create the proposed preserve zone, but that it is already separately a part of our Master Plan. Mr. Engle stated that he worked on the original soil study, and at that time it was widely recognized that the map was not terribly useful because the soil quality could in some cases be overcome by dedicated farming. Mr. Bourdages compared the cherry site inventory map to the township map and noted that some of the supposed best soils are in fact in the Yuba Creek Natural Area wetlands area, which is clearly not suitable for agriculture. Ms. Knopf noted that some of what it can take to farm poorer areas can be potentially stressful to the environment, and reiterated the importance of ensuring that the land to be indicated as desirable for preservation truly be desirable. Mr. Bourdages stated that sometimes people don't really appreciate the local natural resources. Few places in the world are as well suited to growing stone fruits; there is a reason why 75% of the tart cherries grown in the nation are grown here, with 25% coming from Leelanau alone.

Mrs. Goss felt that farmland and open space were connected to one another when the millage was voted in. Now she is hearing that they are two separate and distinct issues, however the second bullet point in the text seems to her to point to the aspects of farmland preservation that are desirable in a non-agricultural context. Mr. McDonough stated that the text in yellow was taken straight from the township's PDR ordinance that he felt addressed the questions that must be addressed to make a grant application. Mrs. Goss believes that one reason the millage was adopted was because it seemed that farmland and non-farmland open space were encompassed. Mr. Bourdages stated that farmland preservation can have non-agricultural benefits such as providing wildlife habitat and something pleasant for the community to view.

Mr. Hanna stated that he had read in the newspaper and on the website that the township is considering an update to the zoning ordinance. He wants a guarantee that agricultural properties not be downzoned. He did not intend to refer to the map as a tool for downzoning, but he did intend to caution that he believes there may be an intention by the current administration to do such a thing. Mr. McDonough spoke to the motion that was passed in June that clearly stated that the map should not be used as a tool for making zoning decisions, and asked if this would allay public fears. Corpe said she had been told there were rumors spreading that the township administration was actively considering a change to the Zoning Ordinance that would downzone the agricultural district from 1 unit per 5 acres to 1 unit per 20 acres, and

that she was personally unaware of any such proposed action or even any related discussion.

Mr. Engle drew attention to the very first paragraph of the Agricultural section of the Master Plan, and stated that he does not perceive any clear definition for the term “limited residential housing.” This could cause difficulties.

It was decided that discussion regarding the text of the proposed Master Plan amendment would be continued at the September 26 regular Planning Commission meeting. The map will be discussed again at the October meeting.

Andy Andres Jr. suggested that amendments to the map should include color coding indicating different levels of likelihood for long-term agricultural viability. Corpe and Takayama noted that the question of which lands are more likely to remain farmland and which are more likely to develop is handled through the PDR application scoring system. If there’s only one parcel of land in any given application cycle, there’s still the decision of whether to preserve that parcel or not. Development of the scoring system is still in process. Mr. Andres is looking for a ranking of which properties are most desirable, less desirable and least desirable to make it easier to visually evaluate. Mr. Engle suggested that a map be produced that uses color to show the pattern of existing land uses so that it will be easier to evaluate whether adjacent agricultural lands can and should be preserved.

Mr. Gurr stated that there were discussions with Scott Everett from American Farmland Trust, who had advised interested township about preservation in Grand Traverse and Antrim Counties, about the need to include language about general open space protection. Mr. Everett indicated it important to keep in because history has shown that people are less likely to vote money to help farmers alone.

Public Hearing closed at 10:00 p.m.

David asked for clarification that the text will be discussed at the September meeting but the map will be discussed in October, and received it.

3. Other Business:

- a) Brief mention of Wednesday, September 21 meeting at Bertha Vos Elementary School Cafeteria, 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. to begin work on Future Land Use Map for addition to the Acme Township Master Plan.

4. Public Comment:

Mr. Engle stated that a township meeting over a year ago he mentioned that the County Road Commission had covered up some surveying monuments when tar and chipping the roads. They have been further covered up. This will be mentioned to Jim Maitland. Hardin also mentioned that it would be nice if the bike lanes created on Bunker Hill would be marked as such on the pavement to encourage bikers to stay in them rather than using the main roadway.

Meeting adjourned at 10:06 p.m.