



**ACME TOWNSHIP
FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, January 24, 2006, 10:00 a.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690**

Meeting called to Order at 10:20 a.m.

Members present: B. Garvey (Chair), N. Veliquette, K. Engle
Members excused: P. Brink, B. Carstens, W. Kladder, M. McDonough, R. Saylor,
Staff present: S. Corpe, Township Manager
N. Edwardson, Recording Secretary
Also present: B. Bourdages, Farmland Preservation Specialist

Bourdages reported that progress is being made on the Bi-County farmland preservation initiative. Antrim County has appointed a board chaired by Dorrance Amos.

Regarding the scoring system, it must contain a measure of development pressure. The one formulated as a preliminary is based on proximity to certain water features, which historically attract development. Antrim County would like all water bodies within the Chain of Lakes. Proximity is currently considered a factor if within five miles.

Antrim also feels that a scoring should be weighted not only towards proximity to protect farmland, but towards any protected land. When the plan is submitted to Antrim and state for final approval, Bourdages plans to present sample maps showing how scoring would function relative to actual farmland parcels. A secondary step would be to invite all farmland owners to a meeting to see how the scoring system would function.

Bourdages has heard concerns that the bi-county initiative not slow the process of running a grant cycle in Grant Traverse county. Bourdages feels that having the first bi-county urban cooperative agreement will create a new and distinct legal entity. The County Administrators and Prosecutors for both counties find this acceptable as long as there is no question that the authority of the new body is specifically limited by the Farmland Preservation Ordinance.

Bourdages expects a new state grant cycle in Fall 2006 and suggests working backwards from then to plan the first Acme grant cycle. Peninsula Township received funding in the Fall 2005 cycle, although there was some concern over their scoring system. In the last cycle 15 applicants requested a total of \$28 million, and \$1.3 million was awarded. To Bourdages this indicates strong statewide interest in farmland preservation, particularly given the high level of available grant funding. Bourdages is encouraged that the level of public awareness is growing. Veliquette believes that the state and the Governor have a growing awareness that farming is the #2 industry in the state, right behind the automotive industry. And lately the auto makers have had economic setbacks and have made significant layoffs. Dr Soji Adelaja, from the MSU Land Policy Institute has publicly noted the disparity in subsidies between the two industries.

To prepare for a Fall 2006 grant cycle, the county application process and scoring system must be firmed up, a model conservation easement document must be ready for public study (much of the contents will be dictated by state law, the local ordinance and grant source requirements), and the public needs to be informed. Bourdage feels the county level needs will be largely met by the end of March. After that an informational session could be held with landowners, but before the farmers get busy. April was selected as the target month to send out information, solicit questions and gauge interest. The group should meet again in February to draft a recommendation to present to the Board for action to enable the April presentation.

A federal fund appropriation has been made but it's unknown what Michigan's share is and there's no reason to feel that there's any real opportunity for Acme to benefit from what will probably be a late spring federal grant cycle. Bourdages will keep tabs on that program and keep in contact with its administrator. Engle wants to ensure that our program will meet federal eligibility requirements as well as state. Federal applications can be tricky and it would be wise to have guidance.

Roy Challenger, 3885 Bunker Hill Road, stated that he asked to have his property excluded from the eligibility area, but the map adopted included his land. Why was he ignored? Garvey indicated that the decision was made by the Planning Commission. This committee gave them two maps from which to choose. A discussion followed.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:45 a.m.