



**ACME TOWNSHIP
FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, January 18, 2010, 1:00 p.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690**

Meeting called to Order at 1:00 p.m.

Members present: B. Garvey (Chair), B. Carstens, G. LaPointe, W. Kladder, Township Supervisor,
S. Vreeland, Township Manager

Members excused: None

Staff present: N. Edwardson, Recording Secretary

Also present: B. Bourdages, Farmland Preservation
K. Engle, D. Hoxsie, D. Morrison, J. Pulcipher, R. Sayler, C. Walter,
D. White, N. Veliquette

1. **Limited Public Comment:** None
2. **Approval of Minutes from November 4, 2009 meeting:**
Motion by LaPointe. Seconded by Garvey to approve the meeting minutes from November 4, 2009. Motion carried unanimously.
3. **Correspondence**
 - a. **01-06-10 Dorance & Julia Amos letter** offering 2 parcels of land to future round 2 of the township Farmland Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program:
 - b. **Kladder response letter** to Amos letter
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. **Update on PDR purchases and status of Option Agreement**
 - b. **Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program Update**
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Discuss potential Spring 2010 farmland tour (Kladder)**
 - b. **Open forum discussion: how Acme Township's Zoning Ordinance can be revised to be more agricultural and agribusiness-friendly**
Representatives of all the major farming families in the township were invited to participate in the beginning of a discussion about Acme's A-1 district zoning ordinances. Issues and concerns were put into four categories on a big flip chart; Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats ("SWOT Analysis"). From this we will look at the list and begin categorizing and distilling it down into key principles and categories and from there we could generate specific ideas for how ordinance provisions could be amended, added to, or subtracted from. These ideas would be compiled in a report/recommendation explaining the ideas, reasoning behind them and benefits to the farming and larger communities. This report would then be forwarded by the farming community and the advisory to the Planning Commission for discussion.

The desired outcome would be that the Planning Commission would be supportive of the proposed changes and have them drafted into formal ordinance language and

proceed through the formal public hearing and adoption process at the Planning Commission and Board levels. Items identified by the group were:

STRENGTHS

- New State Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPS) for farm markets, including tables of what authority regulates what activities
- Existing township zoning ordinance language recognizing State GAAMPS
- Both urban and rural community members tend to value agricultural land preservation

WEAKNESSES

- Current zoning ordinance language is more restrictive than/inconsistent with State GAAMPS
- Local micromanagement of allowable range of activities
- 5 acre minimum lot sizes required
- Farming uses are not listed first in the “uses by right” portion of the A-1 district section of the zoning ordinance, and the language in the “intent and purpose” paragraph of this section mentions agricultural practices that disturb residential land uses rather than residential land uses that disturb agricultural land uses – emphasis seems to be misplaced
- The onus for specific buffers and setbacks of residential and other developed land uses in the A-1 district should be on the developed lands and not on the farmlands.
- Wayfinding signs are needed for “internal” agribusinesses (those not located immediately on US 31 or M-72 East)
- Is the township doing enough to encourage the location and development of local food processing facilities?
- Public Education

OPPORTUNITIES

- Ordinance revisions can minimize “red tape.”
- Incent/reward Agricultural Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program commitments by farmers by allowing different “by-right” and/or special uses.

- The township government can serve as a central agriculture information source
 - Maps
 - Other ag-related information
 - A township directional sign program (similar to that recently adopted by Traverse City)
 - Website
 - Social Networking
 - Snohomish County
 - “What’s Happening in Acme’s Agricultural District This Week?”
- Public Education
- Consider amendment to PDR program and/or a companion program to protect near-farm non-working lands and create buffers for working farms
- Coordination with Shoreline Preservation Program

THREATS

- Aging current-generation farmers who may not have younger generation family members interested in continuing to farm – need to attract young entrepreneurs to farming
- Traffic
- Non-farm development
- Effect of regulation on development rights value
- M-72 Corridor needs more land use planning.
- Shoreline Preservation Program

ADJOURNED AT 3:10 p.m.