

**ACME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
PDR/TDR ORDINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE
ACME TOWNSHIP HALL
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690
7:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 10, 2004**

Meeting called to Order at 7:10 p.m.

Members present:

Planning Commission: Herb Smith (Chair), Bob Carstens, Owen Sherberneau
Township Board: David Amon
Acme Citizenship: Ken Engle

Members excused:

Planning Commission: None
Acme Citizenship: Rick Saylor

Staff present:

S. Corpe, Office & Planning Coordinator/Recording Secretary

1. New Business:

a) Preliminary Discussion regarding concepts relating to purchase and/or transfer of development rights from farmlands and outlying areas of the township: Smith explained that tonight's meeting is the first time this group has convened to discuss purchase and/or transfer of development rights and open space preservation. We are changing the way we handle subcommittees.

Corpe introduced the commission to the materials on the table. Mentioned county meeting.

Discussion about how lands are valued (two appraisers) state certified/chosen and/or chosen by the landowner. When Ken Engle sold land to the federal wetlands reserve program the feds chose one appraiser who established a "take it or leave it" offer. He was the last person before funding caps by county were established that were much lower than the offer he received.

Amon stated that he spoke with Lon Bargy, Milton Township's Supervisor. Antrim County has adopted a county PDR ordinance, and they are thinking of beginning a county-wide funded acquisition program. Some of the farmers in Antrim County also own property in Grand Traverse County. Mr. Bargy says that farmers in his area generally seem to feel that whether or not they ever use the program, it can't hurt to have it around. He has heard that Whitewater Township may ask its citizens for a PDR millage.

Acme has not been involved in the local inter-disciplinary push since Sherrin left.

Corpe re: earlier County meeting.

Mr. Bargy says that there is a new Rotary Grant application. Milton would house the funds rather than Acme. We will likely be asked for more matching funds. We contributed \$3,000 towards the last grant.

Amon doesn't want Acme to be left behind. This is important in terms of our Master Plan. We can help get the public involved and behind the push. If we are going to participate in Rotary grant, we must decide by March 25.

Engle has a few questions he feels the group should consider. Looking at our zoning map, and the fact that we are a fairly small township, there are few farmers and less farmland here than in some other townships. We are facing more development pressure than the others in the initiative. And, regarding the idea that farmers farther north might not use the program but having the funds available won't hurt, he wonders what good the program is if nobody takes advantage of it. The interesting thing about Leelanau County, and the idea that most of our tax base is south of Bunker Hill Road...most of the opposition in Leelanau County was from farmers and not taxpayers. He perceives that this was because some farmers felt they would be less benefited than others. Carstens stated that

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this may be due in part to the scoring criteria that favor parcels that are contiguous to other tracts of land. To him, it's a shame that the length of time a property has been in a family or whether or not the property is a wildlife sanctuary rather than just farmland doesn't carry more weight in the rankings. Engle's point is that we need to seek ways to make the program compelling to the target audience.

One particular problem relates to farmers getting out of the business. Taking into account their years of labor and the customary debt load, it can be hard for them to sell their property to another farmer who can carry on agriculture at a price that is both sufficient to cover the retiring farmer's investments and debts and affordable for a new farmer to be able to actually farm the property. Can we acquire enough dollars in a farmland preservation fund? Would anyone want to start farming.

There has to be a willing buyer, willing seller and profitable agriculture. Amon concurred – he spoke to Kiwanis the other day and was asked, and said that the best way to maintain local architecture is to make farming profitable – buy the product at a decent price.

Amon noted that TDR depends on a willing buyer and willing seller. Amon's scenario of the 100 acre parcel. He looks at it that for prime development parcel a developer might pay \$30,000/acre, but he could buy more rights from a farmer for less.

Taxes. Engle says we are still seeing an increase in property values due to local development. And, even if an easement, that land and surrounding land still increase in value because people like to live next to property that will never be built on. Engle saw 20 years ago in British Columbia that people would buy 20 acres and build huge houses and lease the rest of the property to the farmers. The closest thing around here is on the Peninsula where people grow grapes on larger tracts of land. He used to ask Sherrin Hood, we don't know as we look far ahead into the future. what he sees happening in our area is hobby/specialty farms. Perhaps more for pleasure than for profit. What size parcel do you want to see in the rural areas? Instead of going with the Amon scenario with cluster development, he feels you could maximize your profit better with bigger lots. Right now we have 5 acre minimum zoning. They don't seem to work so well. It's not a good zoning practice. With OSD in place, can we in some way create "reverse zoning" and encourage estate sized parcels but still ...grandfather development right to ease pain of "downzoning." Any farmer trying to farm in Ag right now has trouble with 5 acre parcels next door objecting to agricultural practices. And revisit setbacks.

We are a different breed of farmer.

Can you transfer between adjoining municipalities? That would be an advantage of a County program. Can two adjoining townships work together.

Future 2-tiered education program for farmers.

Tax ramifications of giving extra

Engle asked about OSD – people who don't live in one but live on a county road. What do they think. With houses close together we will get the look of a tight neighborhood. We would actually lose the open space look. Most of the people choosing to live in one. Need to provide incentive for people choosing to live on larger parcels to choose to treat them in pleasing, natural ways.

Engle: another unique thing that needs to be addressed that's going on here: the farmers farming here are not inclined to develop piecemeal.

Corpe: don't talk about farmers keeping farming.

Engle: everyone has same access: no ranking. Convince everyone of value of program.

Smith: ask Rick Wilson and Jim Lively to join the study committee.

Corpe: 3-pronged process: TDR/PDR/Open Space Fund.

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Engle: Peacock parcel on the market for a very long time. Finally bought for development by Ron Shaw.
Morrison Orchards on the market for 2 years.

Do an invitation letter to meetings to everyone getting an agricultural exemption.

Next meeting April 12 7:00 p.m.

2. Other Business:

3. Public Comment:

Adjournment 9:10 p.m.