

Meeting Minutes

Cascade Charter Township Planning Commission

Farmland Preservation Sub-committee

Wednesday, September 27, 2023

8:00 am

ARTICLE 1: Call the meeting to order

Chairman Scott Rissi called the meeting to order at **8:01 am**. Members in attendance included Joe Engel, Ryan Bruneau, and Ralph Moxley. Also, in attendance were Planning Director Brian Hilbrands, Zoning Administrator Madison Smith-Jacoby, and Trustee Timmy Noordhoek.

Also joining the sub-committee was specialist Matthew Channing of **Kent County Farmland Preservation**.

ARTICLE 2: Approve the Agenda

Member Engel moved to approve the agenda. Member Moxley seconded the motion. Motion approved by all members of the sub-committee.

ARTICLE 3: Approve the Minutes of the August 31 meeting

Member **Bruneau** asked that his name be spelled correctly on page 3, paragraph 4.

Top of page 2, change to say "Approximately 60% of the **944 acres** of the Farmland Preservation Zoning District is **Farmland**."

With those two changes member Engel moved to approve the minutes from August 31. Member Bruneau seconded the motion. Motion approved by all members of the sub-committee.

ARTICLE 4: Disclose any Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of Interest was noted by any member of the sub-committee.

ARTICLE 5: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were present at this meeting of the sub-committee.

ARTICLE 6: Discussion with Matt Channing, Kent County Agricultural Preservation Specialist

Kent County Agricultural Preservation program started over 22 years ago.

Mr. Channing stated that the historical cost to purchase development rights in Kent County to preserve farmland is \$4,000/acre. Kent County will pay farmers to preserve their land as farmland and not sell it for development.

Kent County prioritizes properties for grants that are furthest away from public utilities (water and sewer). They utilize a rubric to determine how properties are selected.

Townships in Kent County can focus on areas that they wish to preserve as Farmland and then coordinate that focus with Kent County Agricultural Preservation to fund grants for preserving key parcels of farmland. It was noted that these properties do not need to be located in a Farmland Preservation zone.

Cascade, Ada, and Caledonia Townships are all facing more development pressure as residential areas expand to the east and south in Kent County. Grattan Township is not facing as much pressure for residential development.

Grattan Township utilizes PUDs to preserve farmland by separating the open space in a PUD from the adjacent developed space. The open space can be used to preserve farmland that is not adjacent to the developed space. This is often achieved through TDR, which stands for the Transfer of Development Rights. Mr. Channing stated that if the Township is interested in this approach, he could look at having someone from Grattan Township to come and speak.

More farmers are getting into commercial operations that attract visitors to their farm. Robinette's in Grand Rapids Township is a good example of this commercial operation.

There are many farmers that do not need the money from farming operations to survive. Many are hobby farmers and they enjoy their rural environment and wish to save that farm forever.

ARTICLE 7: Goals of Sub-committee for next meeting

Our next meeting of the Farmland Preservation sub-committee will be **Wednesday, October 11** at 7:30 am at Cascade Township offices.

ARTICLE 8: Any other business

Focus on Agri-Business in the Township. Denny Heffron would be a good speaker for this topic. Mr. Heffron is the Chair of the Ag Board and also a Grattan Township Trustee.

It was mentioned that an article could be placed in the newsletter to let property owners know that applications open November 2nd for the County preservation program.

ARTICLE 9: Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

No visitors were present at this meeting of the sub-committee.

ARTICLE 10: Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by member Engel at 9:28 am. Motion seconded by member Moxley.
Motion approved by all members.