



## **Rural Committee** **September 19, 2006 Kent / MSU Extension** **Meeting Minutes**

Attending:      Marsha Wilcox                      Staff:      Kendra Wills  
                    Cynthia Price  
                    Kevin Wisselink  
                    Don Hilton Sr.  
                    Bonnie Shupe  
                    Jim Ferro

1. Meeting called to order at: 9:45 AM by Bonnie Shupe.
2. August minutes were approved with one spelling correction.
3. Bonnie apologized for not having an agenda prepared. She and Tom were communicating about it but didn't get it finalized. Bonnie noted that she feels co-chairing isn't working. She feels there needs to be a chair responsible for the agenda.
4. The group discussed whether or not to have a meeting in October due to the conflict with the WMSA conference. The group concluded they will cancel the Oct Rural Committee meeting so people can attend the WMSA conference since it is a goal of the Rural Committee to support the WMSA Green Infrastructure project.
5. Kendra reported that she sought PMT support for United Growth hosting a bus trip to Peninsula Township to learn about their PDR Program. Would be open to surrounding counties as well. Target audience would be Ag Board members and County Commissioners. Kendra was thinking of doing the bus tour this October but group suggested to wait until March or April because more people would be available and can do a better job organizing presentations. Also may be able to include in proposal to Frey to cover costs of the bus.
6. Bonnie Shupe brought up the letter to the editor from Lisa Lyons of the Grand Rapids Association of Realtors last week. Bonnie asked if Rural Committee members wanted to write a letter clarifying that the public does benefit from farmland preservation. Jim clarified that paying farmers for their development rights is not a subsidy but a fair market transaction. Marsha and Don also agreed that there are many benefits to farmland preservation such as open space, wildlife habitat, water and air quality benefits. Don felt that farmland preservation for the purpose of food security may be overstated. Marsha said this is why the public education campaign is needed and we need to do a good job at identifying long term goals so we can submit grant proposal to Frey to fund this project.
7. Group discussed meeting agendas for the remainder of the year. No meeting in October due to WMSA conference and no meeting in November due to visioning/action planning session. Group decided to invite Sharon Steffens to December meeting to hear what is going on with REAP and how the ag industry is doing on the Ridge.

**Adjournment.** Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Submitted by, Kendra Wills