



**Rural Committee**  
**July 18, 2006 Kent / MSU Extension**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
9:50 – 10:30 a.m.

Attending: Marsha Wilcox  
Cynthia Price  
Tom Cary  
Kevin Wisselink  
Don Hilton Sr.  
Bonnie Shupe  
Dave Bee  
Jim Ferro

Staff: Kendra Wills

1. **Meeting called to order at: 9:50 AM by Tom Cary.**
2. **May and June minutes were distributed by Tom for the group to review.**
3. **2006 Committee Goals**
  - a. Tom asked Kendra to give an update on the PDR Program. The following is a brief summary of the update:
    - i. 2006 application cycle ended in April. 39 applications were accepted. More were from pervious applicants.
    - ii. Sought federal funding for seven farms in Alpine, Ada, Sparta, Grattan, Vergennes Townships. No federal funding was awarded to date. More funding may become available this fall. If no federal funding, Ag Board will likely try and preserve farms with funding they have.
    - iii. 17 farms were seeking federal funds, only 3 were awarded funding - all in Washtenaw County as part of the GreenBelt initiative. Kent County Ag Board is meeting with federal program coordinator in Sept to see where Kent County is coming up short in the scoring process.
    - iv. State PDR grant cycle is coming up in October. Townships must be pre-qualified which involves: having a Master Plan no older than 5 years, having language why farmland preservation is important and strategies to protect, area on future land use map identified for farmland preservation. Only 5 townships in Kent County have pre-qualified. Ag Board looking at applying for state funds on properties in Vergennes, Alpine and Nelson – all three townships have not pre-qualified and all are working on Master Plan updates.
    - v. Kendra is contacting all three townships to work on trying to get them pre-qualified before Sept 30, if not have to wait until next year.
    - vi. Bonnie noted that she will look at spreadsheet of townships to identify contact person for each township for Kendra re: PDR pre-qualification.

- b. The group discussed the fact that local grocery stores are not carrying many local ag products. Discussed prices at farm stands being higher than grocery store out of state products. This relates to a goal of documenting the county's ag resources and then creating an economic development plan. Kendra noted that an economic development plan for the ag industry in the county would award points to the county's state PDR grant application.
- c. Marsha gave an update on the PR committee's work and upcoming meeting with the Frey Foundation on July 24. She noted that the committee wants to sponsor a broad public education campaign through radio, print and TV news outlets on land use issues. Will see what Frey is interested in funding. Jay Cravens, Manager of Cascade Township is on the committee and suggested conducting focus groups of target audience members to create message that will resonate with people.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Submitted by, Kendra Wills