

City of Ann Arbor

100 N. Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
www.a2gov.org



Action Minutes

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

4:30 PM

City Council Chamber

Greenbelt Advisory Commission (GAC)

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Hall officially called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. in the County Board of Commission Public Meeting Room, 220 N. Main.

ROLL CALL

Present 5 - Tom Bloomer, Dan Ezekiel, Jennifer Santi Hall, Peter Allen, and Carsten Hohnke

Absent 4 - Michael Garfield, Gilbert S. Omenn, Laura Rubin, and Sylvia Taylor

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

1. Ken Lake, Michigan Agricultural Commodities Inc.

Ken Lake, from Michigan Agricultural Commodities Inc., thanked the commission for inviting him down to talk this evening. Mr. Lake talked a little about the Michigan agriculture and infrastructure. Michigan Agricultural Commodities Inc., is a 30+ year old company that started in 1976 running 10 grain elevators in Michigan and a couple more in Ontario.

He explained that some farmers may be financially struggling or cannot afford a Michigan green license. Michigan Agricultural Commodities Inc. has marketing agreements with those farmers helping them merchandise their grain.

The company effectively purchases grain, soybean, oats, rye, etc. from farmers and then merchandise them on throughout the trade.

They have trading offices in Lansing, Michigan and Ontario and have 30 million bushel space sfor storage for the grain and other products. This makes up the largest grain elevators in the State.

Mr. Lake went on to say that the commodities they handle are trucked delivered to the grain elevators and then placed into bigger trucks or unit trains and stored.

(Commissioner Omenn arrived at 4:45 p.m.)

Mr. Lake presented slides to the commission discussing production in the State as a whole. He explained that farmland over the past 30 years has declined while their production levels have come up. An example of this is corn production over the past 30 years. It has increased from 69 bushels per acre in 1976 to about 143 bushels per acre. (A copy of the slide presentation is on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Mr. Lake said that he knows the commission is interested in preserving farmland and open space. He serves on the Lenawee County Advisory Board and they have the same sort of goal and are very interested in preserving farmland and open space in their county.

A concept they went with was to look at more value added agricultural projects that they could bring to the region. He served on the board that launched the ethanol plant in Medina Township and it was a success in regards to bringing the proper development to the region, giving farmers a place to sell their crops and make money, therefore preserving farmland.

Moving forward in the company, he said that, agriculture is on the front page,

production is increasing, corn production must increase and their leadership is strong.

Present 6 - Tom Bloomer, Dan Ezekiel, Jennifer Santi Hall, Gilbert S. Omenn, Peter Allen, and Carsten Hohnke

Absent 3 - Michael Garfield, Laura Rubin, and Sylvia Taylor

2. Oran Hesterman - Fair Food Network

Oran Hesterman, president of Fair Food Network, a nonprofit organization, explained that they have worked on issues of sustainability and equity in southeast Michigan as well as nationally. Mr. Hesterman, showed the commission a video framing some of the issues with food systems.

Mr. Hesterman read the following statement: "The new food system is growing like grass through the cracks in our industrial and suburban pavement, it is a strategic economic asset for the state. Michigan becomes stronger on a national and world stage, as its individual communities and regions embrace this emerging economic opportunity as part of their overall strategy, and will help happening places. The time is right for Michigan to act on economic development potential of building a more regional food system. Demand is strong, supply is growing; new market infrastructures as in distribution is emerging and support is coming in many directions. Local sustainability raised food can produce new jobs, build public health and attract more family and business investments in Michigan."

Mr. Hesterman added that that the farmers' markets in Michigan have tripled from 65 markets in the year 2000 to over 200 markets in 2008. Nationally, farmers' markets have increased 150% since 1994 and there are approximately 4,500 farmers' markets across the United States. More than 30 Michigan schools in the northwest part of the state are buying local food products because of the concentrated effort in that area. There are over 4,000 farm school projects or programs happening right now.

The statewide survey in Michigan found that 73% of school food service directors would also like to have more food coming to their school cafeterias that have been grown locally. 9,000 schools in 39 states now have farm school programs.

There is also in the local food economy something known as Community Support Agriculture, where people can pay a subscription at the beginning of the season and share a part of the harvest with the farmer. Michigan now has 69 CSA operations. Nationally, CSA, has grown in 1990 from 60 to more than 1700 operations.

Another area that is expanding is food service. Large companies like Sisco, the largest distributor in the United States, and Taxo, one of the largest food service companies servicing cafeterias around the country, are finally increasing demand for local sustainable organic food. As the demand is building, locally grown food cannot keep up with the demand from schools.

He further stated that this new local food economy will grow intensively and positioning ourselves in the community like we are in Ann Arbor, to make sure we have good farmland available for that increasing opportunity is really critical.

Focusing on the five county areas in east Michigan; what impact would a 20% shift (\$.20 of every food dollar) of food processed locally, sold by locally owned retailers would have on the economy? They found that the impact could generate approximately 35,000 new jobs in Michigan, \$3.5 billion dollars of increased

economic output, \$900 million of increased earnings and approximately \$155 million in tax revenue for local jurisdictions.

He concluded that if the commission wants to try and support this kind of agriculture on land surrounding Ann Arbor, one step is to protect that land by going with a ER program and figure out how to find ways to assist farmers in actually creating viable and operable operations to keep local farms.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

1. Jack Smiley - PDR Rights for Property in Pittsfield Township

Jack Smiley, with the Southeast Land Conservancy, addressed the commission regarding their application. They placed an application to have the Greenbelt to purchase development rights for four parcels in Superior Township. They applied in order to allow the the opportunity to protect additinal land. The dollars would be essential to a price benefit to one project.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Omenn, seconded by Commissioner Allen, that the agenda be approved as presented. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. **09-0214** Greenbelt Advisory Commission Minutes of January 14, 2009

A motion was made by Commissioner Omenn, seconded by Commissioner Allen, that the minutes of January 14, 2009 be approved by the Commission with changes and forwarded to the City Council meeting of 4/20/2009. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **09-0211** Strategic Plan

Commissioner Hall thanked Ginny Trocchio for all of her hard work in getting the Strategic Plan completed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ezekiel, seconded by Commissioner Allen, that the Strategic Plan be approved. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried. The plan will be sent to City Council for their information.

2. **Land Preservation Signs**

Ms. Trocchio presented a revised Land Preservation sign to the commission. She explained that staff is able to create the signs in-house on metal stakes for a minimal cost of \$20 per sign. Ms. Trocchio asked for approval from the commission and they would then provide them to Preserve Washtenaw for their review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bloomer, seconded by Commissioner Omenn, that the proposed Land Preservation Sign concept be approved as revised by including the web address www.preservewashtenaw.org and move it forward to Preserve Washtenaw for their approval. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

3. Staff Update

Ms. Trocchio said that at the February meeting, the Commission recommended moving forward with a couple of new appraisals and updating several older appraisals, in preparation of the 2009 FRPP grant cycle. Since then, they have learned that the FRPP appraisal requirements are changing, so they are holding off on the appraisals until the new rules are determined by FRPP.

They also received notice from the state Agricultural Preservation Board that they will not having a grant round this year so funding for that preservation would not be available.

Commissioner Allen asked what process was being used to get information out to the farmers regarding the bid process.

Ms. Trocchio said that packets were sent to 50 or so land owners. They have also received several calls regarding the process. They have sent supplemental packets to realtors that they have spoken with as well. The information is also placed on the City's web site for anyone who may be interested.

Commissioner Allen recommended adding a link to the paper that talks about the to the article regarding the bid process. Ms. Trocchio, said that they are working on revamping the entire Greenbelt website.

Commissioner Hohnke asked how much has the commission relied on the state Agricultural Preservation Funding in the past.

Ms. Trocchio said that the City is not eligible to apply directly to that source. They rely on their township partners to apply for it. The Hilton property which they completed with Pittsfield Township had a grant for \$255,000.00. That is the only property that they have done that has had State funds.

Peg Kohring informed the commission that Lodi Township has gone through the process of becoming State eligible. While there are currently no grants, it shows that the township is interested in farming preservation.

NEXT AGENDA ITEMS

1. Finances

REPORT FROM COMMITTEES

None.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Omenn, seconded by Commissioner Allen, that the commission enter into Closed session to consider land acquisition. On a roll call, the vote was as follows with the Chairperson declaring the motion carried:

Yeas: 6 - Commissioner Bloomer, Commissioner Ezekiel, Commissioner Santi Hall, Commissioner Omenn, Commissioner Allen, and Councilmember Hohnke

Nays: 0

Absent: 3 - Commissioner Garfield, Commissioner Rubin, and Commissioner Taylor

MEETING RECONVENED

A motion was made by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Omenn, that the meeting reconvene. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the meeting reconvened at 6:25 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Omenn, that the meeting be adjourned. On a voice vote, the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

**Laura Rubin
Chairperson**

**Anissa R. Bowden
Recording Secretary**