

Van Buren County Land Preservation Board
Human Services West Building, 57418 CR 681, Hartford, MI 49057
July 10, 2024 – 6:00 PM

1. **Call to Order, Attendance and Agenda Approval** - Chairperson Hickmott called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Present: Emily Hickmott, Carl Druskovich, Chris Rickli (via zoom), Richard Godfrey, Julie Pioch, Dave Foerster

Absent: William Van Tassel, Scott Cedarquist, and Michael Matheny **Guests:** Lisa Ransler, staff

Approval of Agenda - The July 10, 2024 agenda was approved with no changes.

2. **Approval of Minutes** - Druskovich, supported by Godfrey, made a motion to approve the May 8, 2024, meeting minutes with the following changes: 4. UNFINISHED BUESINESS A. Land Preservation Board Scoring System: Druskovich, supported by Van Tassel, made a motion to approve the scoring system. Motion was adopted. Motion approved unanimously.

3. **New Business**

- a. **Ordinance Review** – The Board reviewed updates to the land preservation ordinance to better define development rights and conservation easement regulations. Discussion included ensuring that the language aligns with state and federal conservation programs, particularly regarding the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program and farmland preservation tax incentives. Updates were proposed to clarify eligibility and application processes for landowners interested in preserving their agricultural lands. Godfrey, supported by Pioch, made a motion to recommend the ordinance revisions to the Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners. Motion approved unanimously.
- b. **Marketing** – The Board outlined plans to enhance outreach efforts for the upcoming December 2024 grant cycle, which will provide funding for new farmland preservation initiatives. Marketing strategies will target underrepresented townships and municipalities, especially those currently lacking involvement in land conservation programs. Board members suggested creating educational materials and hosting informational sessions to increase engagement from local farmers and township officials. The County website LPB page needs to be updated and add detail from flyer that will be created. Staff will work on flyer and press release.

4. **Unfinished Business**

- a. Now that the Bylaws and Ordinance have been reviewed, next on the list for review will be the policies and procedures.
- b. The updated report from the Conservation District has been submitted to MDARD with confirmation that the commercial use of the property is located on a separate parcel, not the parcel the deed restrictions.

- c. Staff will email John Krohn at MDARD to inquire if solar sites are considered eligible agricultural use on farmland preservation sites.

5. Member Reports and Announcements - Board members provided updates on various township initiatives.

- a. **Decatur and Hamilton Townships** are both developing short-term rental ordinances, influenced by increasing demands from residents and changing land use patterns. These ordinances aim to manage local rental properties while preserving the rural character of the townships.
- b. **Housing Market Report** – There is an upcoming county briefing on July 30, 2024, concerning the Van Buren County Residential Target Market Analysis. The report will project housing needs for the next 5-10 years and identify strategies to attract developers. The briefing will be held at the ISD Conference Room, and members were encouraged to attend to better understand how these projections might impact land preservation efforts.
- c. **Palisades Power Plant** – Members noted that the reopening of the Palisades Power Plant could lead to increased housing demands, particularly in South Haven and surrounding areas. This development could affect land use and preservation efforts in the region.

6. Adjournment – Hickmott adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM.