

Northfield Township Land Preservation Committee/Commission

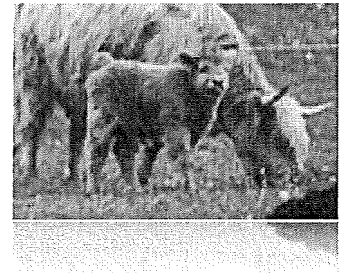
Plan and Budget Request

Purpose of the Commission

The Northfield Township Land Preservation Committee/Commission (hereinafter "Commission" pending Board approval) furthers the strategic interests of the Northfield Township Board of Trustees by accomplishing the stated goals of Northfield Township's Master Plan as stated beginning on page 15:

"Maintain the world character and preserve the local characteristics of Northfield Township including a viable, stable agricultural industry by encouraging the retention and preservation of farmland and agricultural production as well as the preservation of general open space in the undeveloped areas of the township."

The Land Preservation Committee was created to implement this Township goal. In addition, the rural character of our community is mentioned as a priority throughout the Master Plan.



The Proposed Bylaws State:

It is the policy of the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County, and Northfield Township's master plan to preserve open spaces, critical environmental areas, and greenways to maintain the quality of life and likewise to encourage a viable, stable agricultural industry, preserving farmland, and natural areas for recreation. The Land Preservation Commission (LPC) advises and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees on land matters and works to enhance public awareness, commitment, and active participation in the stewardship of agricultural lands and natural areas, and oversees land rights acquisition, management, and disposition.

The Land Preservation Commission shall consist of seven members nominated and approved by the township board.

Why Land Preservation Is Important

Northfield Township continues a long heritage of farming dating back to the early 1800s. Land preservation creates a balance between developed areas and more rural areas. Agriculture is the second largest industry in Michigan. (National Ag Week Flyer). In Washtenaw County, there are over 1,200 farms farming over 170,000 acres. (National Ag Week Flyer). Agriculture, food, and related industries employ 22% of all Michigan workers. (National Ag Week Flyer).

Land preservation protects the large blocks of land required to retain businesses that support farmers and economic efficiencies for farmers. Land preservation supports farming. Farming is an important part of Northfield Township's economy.



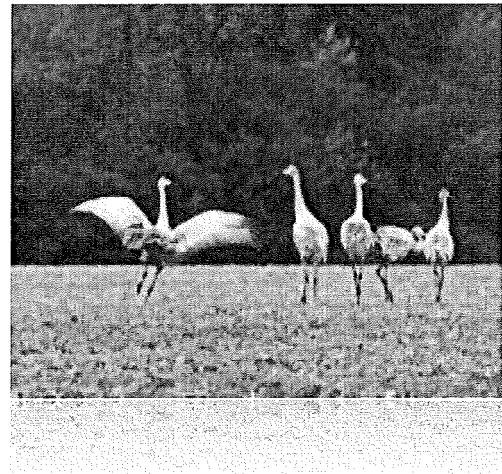
How Land Preservation Works

When a landowner places a conservation easement on their property, it restricts their ability to develop the land by permanently preserving it for agriculture and protecting its natural features such as woods, wetlands, ponds, streams and wildlife habitats.

Landowners will voluntarily apply to the township program. The applications will be scored and ranked using an agreed upon scoring system (most likely Washtenaw County's ALPAC scoring system). The township will seek funding partners. If a property is selected, the township will commission an appraisal to determine the value of the "development rights," a boundary survey and an environmental assessment for hazardous materials. Even after the development rights have been purchased, the property remains in private ownership so property taxes continue to be paid. Other Washtenaw County townships with preservation programs retain Barry Lonik, a preservation consultant with 26 years of experience, to coordinate this process.

Partners

The township will leverage its funds by applying for Federal grants and working with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt, Washtenaw County Parks Natural Areas Preservation Program, Legacy Land Conservancy and with the landowners to discount the purchase price. These partners appreciate working with townships because it also helps them leverage their funds. Each of these partners has worked extensively with local townships.



Millage

Because leveraging County, Greenbelt and Federal funds requires a match by the township, the Committee will consider funding mechanisms for the program. The townships with which we compete with for funding have millages.

Budget Request for the Fiscal Year 2017 to 2018

The Land Preservation Committee requests the sum of \$10,000 from the Board of Trustees.

With this money we would:

1. Hire a land preservation expert to identify the owners of important agricultural and natural lands, contact them, invite them to a forum at which the preservation expert would speak and visit personally with each one to explain the options available at this time and answer any questions. We have a preliminary proposal from Barry Lonik (who is the land preservation expert for most if not all of the townships with preservation programs) that includes a discounted rate of \$60/hr. He believes it would take about 80 hours to accomplish the above work, with the one-on-one visits taking the bulk of time. These visits are the most effective way to reach the landowners. Mr. Lonik has also offered to draft a land preservation ordinance for within that proposal. We will be seeking a more formal proposal from Mr. Lonik and from another land preservation expert who has asked to be considered.
2. The Land Preservation Committee would carry out several community meetings involving residents and landowners to educate them about land preservation, answer questions and gather input. The committee would need funds for postage and publicity. Each mailing approximately \$3,500.00 for a postcard. We anticipate three mailings.
3. Continue to research methods of land preservation including funding and policy options, research methods of encouraging a successful farming economy in Northfield Township.

Please see the attached documents including maps of important agricultural and biodiversity lands, Washtenaw County Scoring System, and draft bylaws for the Commission.