

NAPP Application ● Staff Report ● N-22-2008

Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board

Date Received: May 8, 2008

N-22-2008

TOWNSHIP: Ann Arbor

LOCATION: The 7.3 acre site is located along Dixboro Road, north of Ford Road, in Section 12 in Ann Arbor Township. Ronald L. Exelby, the property owner, is applying to the Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP), requesting that the County purchase this property under NAPP.

REASON FOR PAB REVIEW: Natural Areas Preservation Program Committee Ordinance No. 128 requires that the Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board provide an advisory opinion on the applications submitted to the program.

BACKGROUND: The Exelby site totals 7.3 acres. The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is considering the opportunity of buying this parcel.

STAFF COMMENTS

1. The application's impact on long-range planning

According to the Ann Arbor Charter Township General Development Plan (Township Plan), the long-range planning for this parcel is Recreational Open Space/Public Parks District. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Suburban. Staff has determined the use of this site for passive recreation and/or open space does not conflict with the long range planning for the area.

2. Existing land use of the property and adjacent properties

According to SEMCOG land use data for 2005, the land use on this parcel is currently woodland and wetland. The surrounding land use around this parcel includes single-family residential to the south and grassland and shrubland to the east. According to the application, there are no easements on the property. Staff finds that an open space use on this parcel does not conflict with surrounding land uses.

3. Current zoning of the property and surrounding properties

The zoning designation for this site is Recreation Conservation. The surrounding zoning designations are Recreation Conservation to the west, General Agriculture to the north and south. According to the Ann Arbor Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance),

the intent of the Recreation Conservation District is: "...to preserve and enhance these natural amenities, such as woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitats."

The use of this property either for passive recreation, open space, or a conservation area does not appear to conflict with the Township Ordinance.

4. Compliance with Master Plans

The Washtenaw County Land Use Plan maps the area as Suburban. Suburban areas, according to the County Plan, generally consist of large-lot, single family residential dwellings. The acquisition of this parcel is supported by the County Plan goal to "promote an efficient pattern of development that maintains our sense of place, preserves our natural resources and reduces the effects of sprawl." Further, the County Plan states that "preserving large tracts of natural ecosystems and linkages between these ecosystems are an important part of developing an open space plan. Preserving these areas has positive impacts on air quality, ecological systems, habitats, natural corridors, scenic vistas and water quality. Corridors and natural connections between ecosystems provide a natural flow that stands in stark contrast to small isolated pockets of open space leftover from developments that disrupt natural water systems or trap wildlife."

The land use designation for this site is Recreational Open Space/Public Parks District. The surrounding land use designations are Open Space/Public Parks to the west, and Rural Residential to the north and south. Agricultural and Open Space Preservation Overlay area is to the north across M-14.

Staff concludes that overall, the passive recreational and open space use on these parcels do not conflict with either the County land use policies or the Township Plan.

5. Impact on fragile lands/natural resources

According to Washtenaw County data, the site has wetlands along the western edge and is largely comprised of woodlands. The importance of protecting natural areas is expressed both in the Township Plan and the County Plan. The acquisition of this property through the NAPP program would further these goals. According to the application, surveys by recognized experts or an environmental assessment by a qualified consultant have not been performed.

6. Impact on infrastructure and community as a whole

Public water service is provided by contract with the City of Ann Arbor, and is limited to the sanitary service area. According to Map 7 of the Township Plan, the subject parcel is within the sanitary sewer service area. However, the Township Plan also designates this parcel as Recreational Open Space/Public Parks District. This existence of water and sewer services should have little bearing on the appropriateness of the acquisition of the site through NAPP, as its use as open space and permanent protection meets the goals of the Township.

The Township is presently patrolled by the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. Ann Arbor Township is served by the Ann Arbor Township Fire Department, which has two fire stations, one located on Goss Road and one on Pontiac Trail.

Due to the significant amount of woodland, and the presence of wetlands on this parcel, it has been determined that the property is likely to be significant for its natural feature value and does not appear to impact on public and community services.

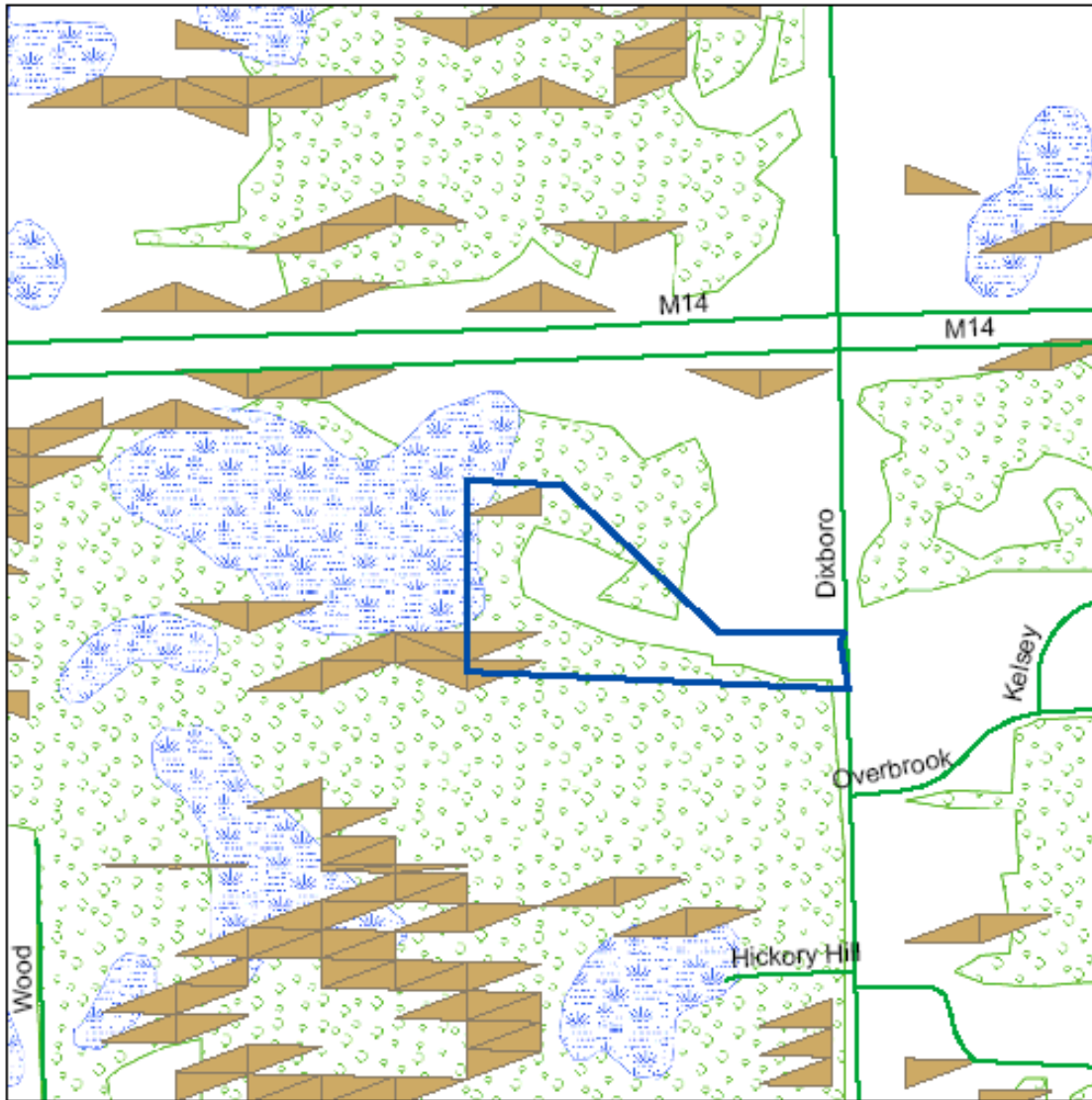
Access to the site would be provided from Dixboro Road. While Dixboro Road is paved, the majority of the Township's roads are local gravel. Traffic counts data have indicated substantial increases in average daily traffic counts on Township roads. As growth and development continues in and around Ann Arbor Township, daily traffic will increase on area roads. If any additional access drives are developed, staff recommends that Access Management Standards, as developed by MDOT or the County Road Commission be consulted.

Conclusion

This area is important for water quality and stormwater management, since there are wetlands and for the preservation of the woodlands and general open space.

In conclusion, based on the observations above, it is the opinion of the Washtenaw County Planning and Environment Department Staff that this parcel for the Natural Areas Preservation Program does not conflict with any land use plans nor the zoning ordinance.

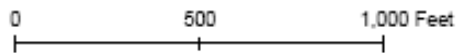
Exelby Property



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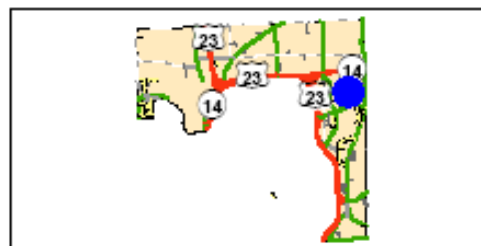
Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP -- NATURAL FEATURES



Legend

-  Roads
-  Steep Slope
-  Wetlands
-  Woodlands



Ann Arbor Township

