

NAPP Application ● Staff Report ● N-23-2008

Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board

Date Received: May 8, 2008

N-23-2008

TOWNSHIP: Webster

LOCATION: The 55 acre site is located along Merrill Road and McClatchey Road, north of N. Territorial, in Section 11 of Webster Township. Manuel Xuereb and Nancy Lee, the property owners, are 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 Xuereb-Lee Property site totals 55 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 Webster Township Master Plan (Township Plan), the long-range planning for this parcel is Rural Residential. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Rural. Staff has determined that 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 entire parcel is woodland and wetland. The surrounding land use around this parcel includes single-family residential, active agriculture to the north and south, and grassland and shrubland. 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 Agricultural District (A-1). The surrounding zoning designations are A-1 to the west, north and south, and Rural Residential (RR) and Public Land (PL) to the east.

According to the Webster Township Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance), the intent of the (A-1) Agricultural District is: "...to preserve and protect areas of prime agricultural soils...to protect open, rural character of area..." Permitted principal uses include farming operations, growing of trees and other nursery stock, public and private recreation areas such as forest preserves and single family detached dwellings.

While the use of this property either for passive recreation, open space, or a conservation area does not appear to conflict with the Township Ordinance, the Public Lands District designation more closely relates to the goals of the intent and uses of the land under NAPP ownership. For consistency purposes, staff recommends the rezoning this parcel as such.

4. Compliance with Master Plans

The Washtenaw County Land Use Plan maps the area as Rural. Rural areas, according to the County Plan, "are recognized for agricultural operations, parklands and vast open spaces." 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."

According to the Township Plan, the site is designated as Rural Residential. The category is described as the following: "land intended for single-family detached dwelling units...in order to preserve and promote the rural character of Webster Township." Clustering is encouraged to "preserve natural features, increase open space, and reduce developmental costs." In addition, the Township Plan states that an intention of the plan is to "preserve the continuity of natural features in order to protect the integrity of ecological systems" and that wetlands and other areas of natural features are not suitable for development. The Township Plan's Natural Features Policies also state that "woodlands should be preserved to protect water and soil quality, preserve wildlife habitats and to preserve aesthetic values...that are characteristic of Webster Township."

While the parcel's designation as Rural Residential does not contradict its use as open space through NAPP, the land use designation as Parks and Public Land may better align with the goals of its preservation. 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, a significant majority of the site has woodlands and wetlands. 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

The Township and County Plans indicate that this area does not have, nor is it projected to have, water or sewer services. The closest area served by public sanitary sewer and water is a small section of land approximately a mile to the northeast at Barker and Hamburg Road.

The Township is presently patrolled by the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. Webster Township is served by the Dexter Area Fire Department, whose fire station is located on Main Street in the Village of Dexter, several miles to the southwest of the subject property.

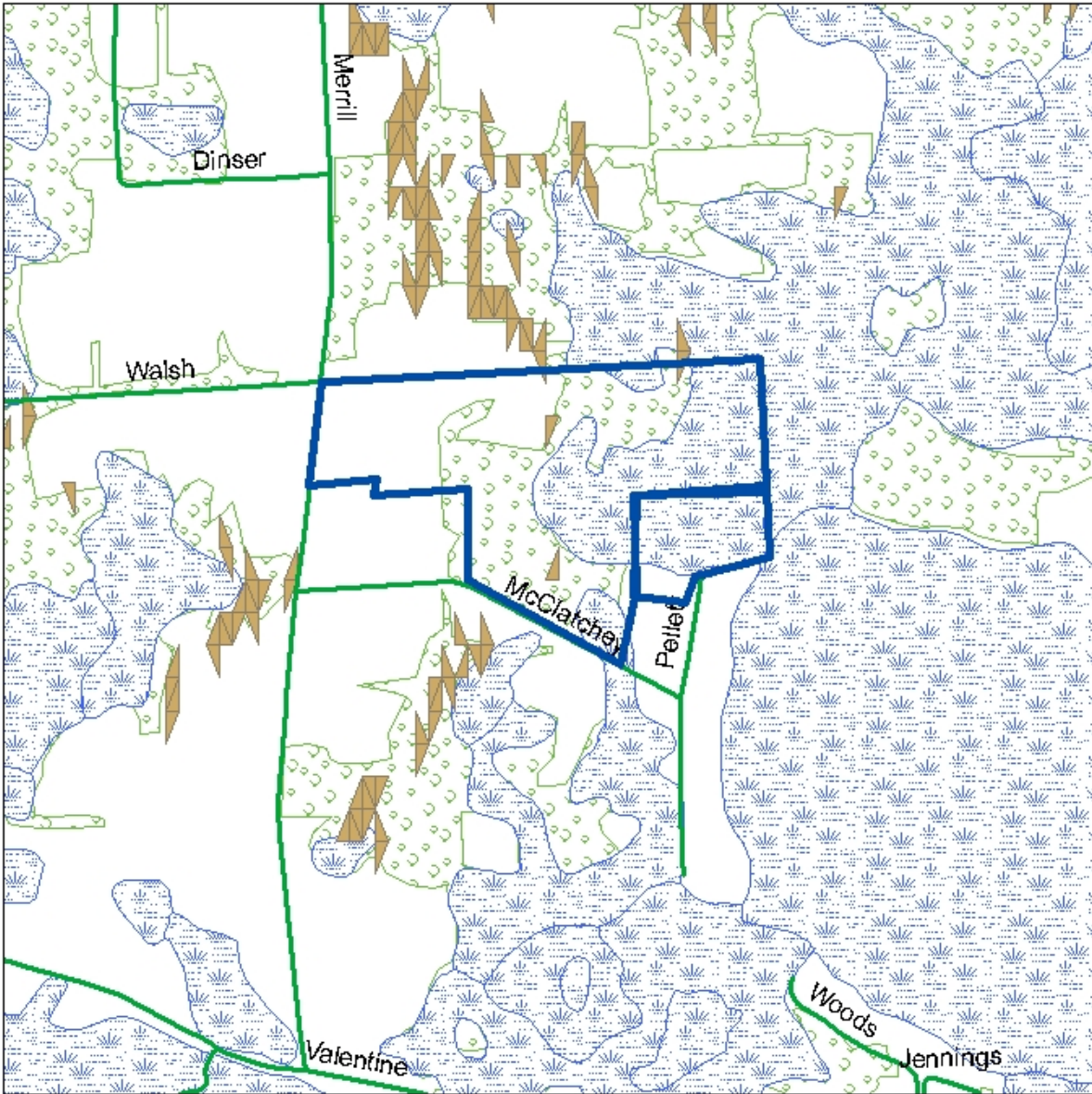
This parcel appears to be significant for its natural feature value and does not appear to impact on public and community services.

Access to the site would be provided from either Merrill Road or McClatchey Road. The majority of the Township's roads are local gravel, including Merrill. Traffic counts data have indicated substantial increases in average daily traffic counts on Township roads. As growth and development continues in and around Webster 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

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.

Xuereb & Lee Property



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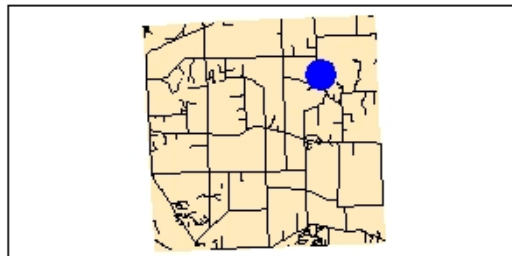
Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

WEBSTER TOWNSHIP -- NATURAL FEATURES

0 500 1,000 Feet

Legend

-  Roads
-  Steep Slope
-  Wetlands
-  Woodlands



Webster Township

