

Stewards of Kleinstuck Community Outreach Meeting
CS Woodland Parcel at 2000 Hudson Street, 11.8 acres For Sale
October 30, 2019 at Kazoo School, 1401 Cherry Street, Kalamazoo.

Attendance: 148 people

Meeting presenters and notes:

Erin Fuller, President of the Stewards of Kleinstuck (SoK), welcomed the crowd and thanked the Kazoo School for hosting the meeting. She shared a brief history of The Stewards of Kleinstuck.

Heather Ratliff, Secretary/Treasurer of the Stewards of Kleinstuck

Presented a brief history of the CS Woodland parcel.

- 11.8 acres for sale, adjacent to eastern border of Kleinstuck Preserve
- 4 acres zoned multifamily and can hold up to 15 housing units per acres
- 7.8 acres zoned single family and can hold up 5 housing units per acre
- City Assessor's Database shows property was purchased for \$775,000 by CS Woodland in 2006
- City Assessor's office suggests that CS Woodland pays approximately \$10,000 per year taxes on the property
- Property is currently listed for sale for \$699,000
- Listing agent is Sandy Edwards at Callandar Commercial Real Estate
- CS Woodland is willing to receive a purchase offer to preserve the land, but is not putting other offers, such as development offers, on hold
- Per Sandy Edwards on 10/25/19, she has had no offers yet from developers
- Acknowledged CS Woodland and their generosity allowing public trespass on the trails on the north side of the property to access Kleinstuck Preserve via both Hudson Street and the YMCA.
- Noted that the Stewards of Kleinstuck have been communicating with local organizations with a history of success with fundraising, holding funds and/or purchasing land for conservation, including the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and The Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Described the goals for the meeting:

- Assess community interest
- Gather ideas about how to protect the parcel
- Sort out next steps

Several community stakeholders and organizational representatives were present and spoke of their interest in having the land preserved.

- Dave Morgan, President/CEO of YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo: The Y enjoys being neighbors with the preserve. The Y takes full advantage of having Kleinstuck nearby via the access through the CS Woodland property, especially for their preschool and early childhood education programs. Kids learn and grow in the woods. On a personal note, Dave enjoys running on the trails in the woods. He is surprised at how much of the 80+ wooded acres aren't part of the preserve. He hopes that the Y continues to have easy access to the Kleinstuck Preserve in the future.
- John Brenneman, representing the Kalamazoo Nature Center: John participates in an annual migratory bird survey that was started in 1973. The Kalamazoo Nature Center has conducted a daily bird survey from March thru May every year for 46 years in the woods in and around Kleinstuck Preserve, including, with agreed trespass from the owner, the CS Woodland parcel. Kalamazoo Nature Center researchers have identified over 210 species of birds during these surveys; many of the species are seen on the CS Woodland property. John invited the public to join him for bird watching in April and May.
- Nate Strong, President, Audubon Society of Kalamazoo: Kleinstuck Preserve attracts a lot of bird species and the Audubon Society has led many birding field trips in the preserve for many years. The preserve draws birders from a larger area than just the local neighborhoods. Preserving the adjacent woods would help protect this prized birding spot.
- Mark Frever, Director of Landscape Services at WMU – Mark has been in his role with WMU for 3 years. Discovering Kleinstuck Preserve has been a joy and he and the 44 employees in the Landscape Services department hold a special spot in their hearts for the preserve. He enjoys hearing stories about their experiences working in the preserve. He is present today representing WMU as an interested neighbor to the parcel for sale.
- Nate Fuller, founding SoK member, former SWMLC land conservation director, and current Sarett Nature Center Director – As a biologist, educator, and father, he chose to make his home near Kleinstuck Preserve. He believes we can make arguments for land conservation from many angles; including increasing property values without adding infrastructure, that open space adds net value to communities, that water hydrology will benefit, etc. But, he believes conservation is driven by the stories that connect us to the land and to our community and our community is better when we have nature in it. When we look back from the future, are we going to be proud of 95 units that increased our tax base, or will we celebrate those who had the vision to set aside and conserve land?

Erin Fuller returned and asked, by show of hands, how many in the crowd were interested in conserving the land for community use. Vast majority of hands were raised. We will work on a plan to attempt to conserve the land.

Primary next step: Develop an Exploratory Team to help SoK move forward. Need members with experience in real estate, law, land appraisal, and surveying.

Questions and Comments:

Fielded by Heather Ratliff

1. Question: Has there been any inclination from the owner whether they have interest in conserving the property versus making a big profit?
While SoK certainly cannot speak for CS Woodland, they appear to have priced the property below what they bought it for, suggesting that a big profit is not their motivation. There has not been a suggestion that they would either donate it or sell it at a subpar value.
2. Question: Did they purchase the property to develop it?
Again, while not being able to speak for CS Woodland, the facts suggest that they did not purchase the property to develop it, since they held it for 13 years as woodland.
3. Question: Does the City ordinance limiting development based on the Natural Features Overlay apply here since the larger ecosystem would be affected?
The first iteration of the Natural Features Overlay covered Kleinstuck Preserve, but not the properties adjacent to Kleinstuck Preserve. Parcels adjacent to Kleinstuck are likely to be included in the Overlay in the next iteration of the plan in 2020. For now, the fact is, the property is currently zoned residential and multifamily and is listed for sale.
4. Comment: The Natural Features Overlay protects features, lakes, slopes, trees and other “features”, not a piece of land or mapped area.
Suggested that detailed discussion of the Natural Features Overlay move to the front corner of the room at the end of the meeting for discussion with both Paul MacNellis and Erin Fuller who sit on the committee for the Natural Features Overlay.
5. Comment: David Anderson, introduced himself then stated that a first step is to move quickly, gather earnest money, and make an offer.
David has agreed to be on the Exploratory Team
6. Question: Do we know what WMU’s position is?
Mark Frever, WMU representative said ‘No.’
7. Question: Has anyone talked to the deer?
No, but all neighbors agreed there are so many opportunities to do so.

Submitted by:

The Board of the Stewards of Kleinstuck

Erin Fuller, President

Kate Kirk-Greenberg, Vice President

Heather Ratliff, Treasurer and Secretary

Paul MacNellis

Dave DeBack

Steve Wester

Jacquelyn McShulskis

Jacob Akert

Fiona Summers

Rina Talaba

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