

MEDIA RELEASE

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OSCODA SETS HEARING ON BROWNFIELD FORMATION

By Mike Desotell of the Oscoda Press

Oscoda – After a presentation from Jim Linton of AKT Peerless Environmental Services, the Oscoda Township Board of Trustees voted unanimously Monday night to go forward in forming a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

A “brownfield” is a property where environmental conditions, actual or perceived, are an obstacle to its redevelopment, according to Linton.

A brownfield authority used tax increment financing to reimburse developers for the cost of correcting the environmental issue or obstacle. This would level the playing field for the redevelopment of property that, without a brownfield plan, may be passed over by developers, Linton explained.

Resident Deanna Ruckman expressed concern.

“I listened to the gentleman about the Brownfield Act, and that rather concerns me, in capturing taxes. The township just raised out taxes. Do they capture those? Do they capture any taxes that we vote in for senior citizens? Do they capture school taxes? Are we going to penalize our children or seniors by capturing taxes that pare put out there for them to improve their building or whatever they do over there? Can they come in and just way ‘We need this property for the betterment of Oscoda and you people have lost your homes?’ I think there’s a lot of things to think about here and it really worries me, especially if your taxes don’t get captured,” she said, directing the last comment at the board members.

“You are diverting an increase in taxes on the property from the place where it would have gone to pay back whoever developed the property for the environmental costs of doing that development,” Linton explained.

Ruckman was not convinced. “It doesn’t matter how you slice it, we still lose it.”

“Well, it depends on whether you count the development as being important enough to do that diversion,” Linton replied. “That is why each brownfield plan goes through a public hearing process. You get the ability to come to the brownfield authority and then to the township board both and say, “I don’t agree with those tax dollars going to reimburse those expenses’ and, if the brownfield authority ro the board agree with that assessment, they don’t pass the plan and it doesn’t happen.”

The trustees set the public hearing for 7 p.m. on Oct. 27 to hear from resident and interested parties concerning the formation of a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.