**Pope/Zoerb Family update on Sunflower Days Event**

A dispute has arisen between the Zoerb/Pope family and the Town of Middleton regarding the structure and organization of the proposed 2019 Sunflower Days event. A letter from the Pope family to the Town concerning this issue was included in this publication in April. We believe that as a member, you have a right to know the family’s position and the position of the Friends.

Accordingly, we include this update for your review. The position of the Friends is that we have no opinion concerning Sunflower Days, but we are opposed to restricting access to the Conservancy. We have always believed that the Conservancy was intended to be and must be free and open to the public. What the Town Board is doing makes the Conservancy neither free nor open during Sunflower Days.

As many of you know, on March 20, 2019, the Pope/Zoerb family sent a letter to the Town of Middleton Board asking it to review the Town’s Sunflower Days proposed event. In that letter, we documented the specific language from the original purchase agreement and the town ordinances that specifically stated the Conservancy would be free and open to the public, and that retail and commercial activities, as well as organized sport activities, could not be allowed in the Conservancy.

In response, the Town Chair sent a terse email saying our letter was “being referred to their attorney.” We received no further contact, nor any invitation from Town officials nor their attorney to sit down and address our family’s concerns.

In response, the family retained legal counsel who helped develop a compromise that would allow the Town to charge visitors attending the event for the transportation to the site, but leaving access to the Conservancy open and free-of-charge. (The Town plans to restrict access to the public for 10 days during SF Days).) As proposed by the Town’s for-profit event management firm, visitors would be bused to the site from staging areas at Greenway Station and a brew pub in Verona, because there would be no parking at the Conservancy or on surrounding roadways. In fact, our compromise would generate a greater cash flow to the Town by charging a $5 bus fee with no admission fee to the Conservancy. The compromise would also address the concerns of the family and the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy.

On June 3, our attorney appeared at the Town Board meeting to offer our compromise. There was no interest in even discussing the proposed compromise. Quoting our attorney … “I was disappointed by the Town Board’s prickliness when it came to this issue. It really was, ‘We’re the Government, and we can do what we want,’ type of stuff.”

The family is very disappointed, but we continue to consider alternatives that will promote and protect Art and Betty Pope’s vision going forward. One of our concerns is the long-term viability of the Conservancy. We appreciate your support in the past and your continued interest in what happens regarding Pope Farm Conservancy in the future.

Sincerely,

THE POPE/ZOERB FAMILY

(Dave Zoerb, Betty Pope’s son and Representative)