OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

Minutes
Regular Meeting, Zoom
7pm, Tuesday March 2ndt, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Megan Boos, Executive Director
Lexie Kasper, Administrative Specialist
David Pyle, Chair
Todd Bowen, Vice Chair
Douglas Grotenrath, Treasurer
Lester Langeland, Director
Callie Melton, Director
Tim Van Dyke, Public Attendee
Heather Varboncoeur, NRCS District Conservationist
Erik Nordman, Public Attendee
Sara Bronkema, MAEAP Technician
Drew Rayner, WMCISMA Coordinator
Ben Jordan, Conservation Technician

CALL TO ORDER Time: 7:02 PM

- Invocation: Todd Bowen

ELECTION RESULTS

- The Election went very smoothly this year and we had a large turnout of absentee votes. Results: Doug Grotenrath 162 votes, Tim Van Dyke 150 votes, Erik Nordman 115 votes.

FAIRWELL TO TODD BOWEN

- The district would like to thank Todd for his time spent on the board. He has been here for 6 years and has been a great pillar to lean on when we needed assistance. He was an especially wonderful resource for human resource advice when needed.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Regular Board Meeting**: February 2nd, 2021
- **Special Board Meeting**: February 16th, 2021
- **Motion:** Todd Bowen **Second/Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

STAFF AND PARTNERING AGENCY REPORTS

Megan Boos, Executive Director- Report attached
Lexie Kasper, Administrative Specialist – Report attached
Heather Varboncoeur, NRCS District Conservationist –Report given

- EQIP and CSP updates. Heather wants to celebrate the number of EQIP applications we received this year, she got at least half from Sara which was a great collaboration effort. Have 3 CNMPs this year when usually there is never more than 1. If all 9 applications get selected for funding, then that will be over $400,000 going to Ottawa County farmers. Heather would like help with CSP applications, there is a lot of opportunity there to get more farmers involved. Applications close March 5th so she would have time to get 1 or 2 more in if there were interested applicants. Langeland: Has a plot of land he wants to implement no till on but it doesn't fall in any current funding projects for OCD. Would this apply to what Heather is looking for? Response: It would have applied for other program but 2021 applications closed in January so Lester could apply and potentially get funding for 2022. Further clarification is given on what CSP is.

Sara Bronkema, MAEAP Technician – Report attached
Drew Rayner, WMCISMA Coordinator- Report attached

- Langeland: Where are we with frog bit and will invasives work change with a new person? Response: Our work encompasses the same things it did last summer with Frogbit and other projects. We still have funding to continue the work we have been doing and it won't change with a new person coming in. Langeland: Is it still viable to be addressing frog bit? Reports say it's spreading. Response: Last year we actually didn't see any spread, there were no new detections. We are effectively slowing it down and limiting spread.

Ben Jordan, Conservation Technician- Report attached
Frank Schroyer, Watershed Technician- Report attached
Ben Savoie, Forester-Report attached

OLD BUSINESS

- **Conservation Needs Assessment:** *We will be discussing what this is and how we use it at an organization. In your packet you will find a copy of our survey and the 2016 Assessment.* (Information Review)

- Recent board meetings discussions have taken place about what our focus is and what we will be gearing ourselves towards. This assessment is actually what determines that, it is the public survey and focus group feedback that indicates where we can be serving the community. Board members that are concerned about the direction of the district may take part in this survey and may promote the survey to the community so they can see the concerns of their neighbors. Langeland: There is a mandate for the soil conservation district from 1938 and it should guide what we focus on. Response: Megan has already shared conservation district law from MACD and will be happy to share it again. This law lays out how a conservation district should operate. Jack will be at our next meeting to help explain the history of the district. Hopefully, this will help us move forward as a team as we all understand the basis of what we are doing. Van Dyke: Are you asking us to distribute the survey? Response: Yes. We want as much community feedback as possible. In addition, so many people responded to campaigning that don't know who we are and they would be a great audience to give their input on their natural resource concerns. Melton: So we have an online and mail in version of this survey? Response: Yes.

- **Tree Sale Update:** *You will find an order form and catalog in your packet for you to distribute as needed.* (Information Review)
  - For it being the beginning of march our sales are going great. We are looking for volunteers on the 13th or 14th for tree wrapping. Grotenrath: Are we going to need to buy more trees? Response: Not yet, but we will take our increasing demand into account when ordering next year.
- **COVID policy:** *Review current policy and discuss needed changes* (Information Review)
  - Nothing new to review, it will just be on the agenda each month. Next month we will address any changes. Pyle: Will we be waiting month to month to hear if we meet in person? Response: Yes. We will be abiding by CDC guidelines every month with the ultimate goal of meeting in person as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Financial:**
  - **Financial Statements: February bank reconciliations and bill payment:** *See financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, and account reconciliations.* (Vote) Pyle: On the profit and loss form, last year we had negative 30 and this year is positive 20. What caused that? Response: It's our grants. Because they are reimbursements and they do not run on the fiscal year, they make it difficult to create a snapshot of our finances such as one profit and loss statement. Pyle: Looking at the checkbook reconciliation, there are checks for 8 farms that were written for $4000 up to $26000. Could this money impact a larger number of farms if we paid smaller amounts to more farms? Response: These checks are from the BRDC grant for cost share from cover crops. It is the goal to have more farms receive that funding. This year was upped to 25 farmers overall in the grant area and the number is steadily growing every year. Van Dyke: Is there a way to push as many acres as possible but the funding is pushed towards small farmers so they aren't shut out? Response: Not really with the 319 grants. They are first come, first serve, but we do attempt to reach out to as many farmers as possible. Van Dyke: So we

need to sell the program so as many farmers know about it and come to you. Varboncoeur: There is also a new program coming out through the farm bill that is designed to help with practices like cover crops and get farmers into EQIP and CSP that will cover the whole county. Langeland: Ben should get scientific studies that prove the improvement of the soil. We should be showing these results to farmers to ensure that they know it is not a one-time practice. Response: Yes, we have extensive outreach efforts to educate the public on this research and we are always trying to expand them. Grotenrath: Is it possible to put MAEAP farms in the front of the line for funding because they're trying to make those good changes? Response: In the past it hasn't been competitive enough to turn away any landowners but there is a potential that this year it could be competitive enough that working with programs like MAEAP could make a farmer more competitive to receive cost chare funding. There is board consensus that it is desirable to spread the funding to as many farmers as possible.

    - **Motion:** Todd Bowen **Second/Support:** Callie Melton **Vote:** Passes

- **Working Groups:** *We will discuss the formation of working groups to increase the flow of information and create connectedness as an organization. You will find the working group proposal.* (Information Review/Vote on in April)
    - Board discussions from the February indicate that the board would like to be more informed on the district's day-to-day management. This is a proposal for the board members and district employees to form working groups. Voting could take place in April if the board would like to discuss and move forward with these committees. There would be 1-2 board members per committee. Being on a committee would involve a quarterly board meeting before our normal board meeting. This would make the board more involved and put a representative in our day-to-day operations. Melton: What types of committees? Response: The committee outlines are laid out in your board packets. It is essential that these monthly packets are read so the board is fully aware of what the district has been up to in a month. Grotenrath: Can we discuss this next month and then potentially vote the month after that? Response: Yes, we do not need to push a vote. Van Dyke: Are the packets typically this long, is that the standard? Response: Yes, district business usually takes around 20 pages and then the rest of the board packet is PA 116s which can be fairly long.
- **Staff resignation:** *Drew Rayner has accepted a position for the Department of Natural Resources. We will discuss the transition. Included in your packets you will find two position descriptions that will go out next week for his replacements.* (Information and Review)
    - His transition will take place over the next month. He has done an amazing job over the last 5 years and built a great program. We are sad to see him go but excited for a new opportunity for him. Rayner: I will be working on expanding education and treatment in areas that aren't grant funded and are not getting as much assistance. They are not considered priority areas for grant funding but are still important. Will no longer be working out of our office. Boos: We are currently getting his position into the public so we can find a good person to take over this position. Langeland: Is it board policy to have a board member in on the interview? Response: Yes, Megan reached out to Todd to see if he would be willing to assist in one last hiring as he has an extensive background in invasives work. Van Dyke: Is there someone in the staff that is currently

working with Drew that we could elevate instead of hiring new? Response: Unfortunately, no, Drew has a very specific job and we need a very specific skillset. Our current employees are allowed to apply and we would consider them, but the position relies heavily on grant writing and administration and currently no one on the staff holds those needed skills.

- **Grant Update**
  - Pending:
    - RCPP (3.2 Million, Federal)
    - Crockery Creek and Sank Creek 319 (700,000, Federal)
    - MISGP CORE 21 (60,000, State)
    - USFS (50,000, Federal) Received
    - MISGP HWA (200,000, State)
    - Watershed Counsel (40,000, Federal)

CORRESPONDENCE:
P.A. 116: Hanenburg Farms- Parcel # 70-04-25-100-003

ADJOURN – **Time:** 8:22 PM
Motion: Doug Grotenrath **Second/Support:** Todd Bowen **Vote:** Passes
Next meeting: 7:00 PM, April 6th, 2021

Sign:_____ Date:_____