OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

MINUTES

Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6pm, Tuesday May 9th, 2023

Attendance

Megan Boos, Executive Director
Benjamin Jordan, Watershed Technician
Natalie Beakins – CISMA Coordinator
Matt Hehl, Chair
Tim Van Dyke, Vice Chair
Douglas Grotenrath, Treasurer
Rivka Hodgkinson, Director
Callie Melton, Director
Sharcy Ray – District Conservationist

CALL TO ORDER: 6:07

Invocation – Matt Hehl

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Regular Meeting:** May 9, 2023
- **Agenda for May 9, 2023**
  - **Moving Jacks portion to bottom of agenda (MACD summer conference)**
  - **Legislative day questions**
  - **Megan's report/updates moved to staff and partners**
- **Motion to approve the amended Agenda and Minutes:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Support**: Callie Melton **Vote:** Passes

PUBLIC COMMENT

STAFF AND PARTNERING AGENCY REPORTS

Megan Boos- Executive Director- Report
Natalie Bekins- CISMA Coordinator – Report
Will Latham- Invasive Species Specialist - Report
Caryn Dawson- MAEAP Technician – Report
Morgan Anderson- Produce Safety Technician - Report
Forest Pest Technicians-Report
Ben Jordan, Conservation Technician- Report
Sarah Bowman, Watershed Technician-Report
Alex Svoboda, RCPP Project Manager-Report
Kyle Hildebrandt, Soil Conservation Technician-Report
Ben Savoie, Forester-Report
Keely Adkins-Dunham, CISMA Project Advisor- Report
Lexie Kasper, Educational Program Coordinator
Sharcy Ray- District Conservationist
MDARD-Report

Monthly Program Highlight: CISMA

- Cooperative Species Management area. Each county is covered under a CISMA and the West Michigan CISMA is the largest statewide
  - Two separate programs (Strike Teams & HWA Crew)
  - Various funding streams – state and federal plus core state funding
- 2022 accomplishments include 25,000 trees for HWA (100k total), 49 total acres of invasives treatment

- Callie asks if phragmites can be treated by hiring the CISMA. Natalie mentions two funding streams that can be used to treat it
- There is a short discussion about a communications person working to reach out for landowner permissions, door to door with volunteers, cold calling ,etc.
- Rivka asks about the wait list for treatment and Natalie responds that in some cases its up to 2025. A discussion is had about workshops and information being provided to help landowners self treat on their property when possible.

Megan's report:

- Policy pieces to review from when we worked with Pam Evans, election policy, communication crisis management, document destruction, conflict of interest, etc. Updates to these policies need to be made and information will be sent to the board.
- MERS – Megan has been talking to an adviser about enrolling our staff in MERS retirement plan. Info will be given to board, and we will be meeting with MERS staff in July to discuss. The board can then review these pieces.
- Megan mentions hiring, scheduling of our audit, lots of budgeting, county & groundwater board, planning for events/annual meeting, tree and plant sale, etc. There is a focus on getting invites out for Annual Meeting and bolstering attendance.

- **Financial: (**Finance Committee and Megan Boos)
    - **o** March bank reconciliations and bill payment**:** *See financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, and account reconciliations.* (Vote)
        - Megan reviews all funds and provides the board with financial reports, grant snapshots, etc. Discussion about a "rainy day fund" that could cover a pay period of a reimbursement doesn't come in time, a client doesn't pay on time, etc.
        - **Motion to accept financials:** Callie Melton **Support:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Vote:** Passes
    - **o** Tree Sale: *profit and loss* (Information)
        - The tree sale went very well. Prices were a little higher this year for small bundles – more customers but a similar amount of trees sold overall. Revenue increased from 13k in 2022 to 23k in 2023.

    - **o** Updated Appropriations budget (Vote)
        - MISGP (Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program) Project and Core funding for Coordinators wages and Strike team, $120,000, Renew
        - MISGP (Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program) Addressing Hemlock woolly Adelgid in West Michigan, $200,000, Renew
            - **Motion to approve updated appropriations budget**: Callie Melton **Support:** Rivka Hodginson **Vote:** Passes
- **Human Resource: -** (H/R Committee and Megan Boos)
- **Motion to add the Educational Program Coordinator to work agreements:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Support**: Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes
    - o Work agreements
        - Communication Specialist (1)
        - Soil Conservation Technician (1)

        - Ecological Technicians (4)
        - Forest Pest Technicians (2)
        - Education Programs Coordinator (1)
            - Tim asks why there is turnover. Megan mentions that some of these jobs are very physical and are “entry level,” and some employees are simply moving locations with family.
            - **Motion to accept all work agreements as one**: Callie Melton **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes
    - Communication improvement:
        - Board packets discussion- see packet
            - Megan asks what the board likes about the agenda and what might need to change. Adding the Executive director report at the beginning & adding a specific item for agenda changes.
            - Doug mentions A timeline every month where all information is dropped on the board at the same time. Callie mentions that the board reports are very long so it’s hard-to-find specific items. Could we add this to google drive instead of emails? Separate attachments? Megan will look into potential changes to assist
            - Discussion on board reports and what information & format the board likes. The general consensus from the board is that the reports need to be shorter and simpler and more focused on accomplishments, rather than week by week tasks/activities. Megan mentions that we will take the feedback and come up with a new format.
        - Communication from board to staff
            - Rivka mentions there need to be a structure to how the board communicates wants, needs, questions about staff and OCD activities and we need to better utilize committees. Staff members shouldn’t be put in the position to have to directly field questions and concerns from board members without proper procedure. HR committee recommends a policy to clarify the committee structure and how board communicate. Should be some timeline of when the proper committee reviews questions or concerns and responds.
                - **Motion that Board Communication with the staff will go through the appropriate committees. If any board member wants to share ideas, concerns, or other information with staff, they will send that to the appropriate committee board members for review and escalation, which will then be replied to in a timely manner by the committee:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes
- **Outreach/Events** (Megan Boos)
    - Annual meeting- Update

        - Megan mentions that we have a great presenter lined up and good education pieces on the district and asks the board to make sure to invite people. Matt asks for a blurb/write up about the meeting that he can share with people.
    - Native Plant sale and plant Workshop- Update
        - Megan shares info about the native plant sale – preordering beach grass and garden kits. The rest of the plants will be sold day of. Brough in over $5000 in pre orders. Saturday May 27th at Hemlock Crossing. Workshop is May 18th – Discussion on weeds/keeping weeds out of your native garden.
    - Others: Cultivating Resilience, Farmers Markets, Earth Day events, Ag board and career panels, White Oak Initiative, and Robinson Planting – Information in packet
        - Callie asks if board members could be invited more often to smaller educational events and activities.
- **Conservation Plans** (Information) – Sharcy Ray
    - Conservation District board voted several years ago to allow Megan to review conservation plans and sign them, rather than have the board review and sign at board meetings. Sharcy gives a brief overview of conservation plans – $1.6 million in projects. Several plans including permanently preserved farmland, 470 acres (5 projects) for soil conservation and health. 2 pasture/grazing systems for 350 acres including fencing, rotations, alternative watering. Pollinator habitat on a blueberry farm, cover crops, wildflowers, etc. Dairy farms – CNMPs. Forest management plan (20 years). $1.1 million awarded – around 2000 acres. Ranking process/competitive and some did not get funded – ag chemical buildings.

- **Grants:** (Megan Boos)

    - **Pending:**
        - Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Grant – Section 319-Central Ottawa County Watershed Restoration Project, $600,000, NEW
            - Replaces “Phase 4” of the BRDC project and adds the Pigeon River and Rush Creek Watersheds. $600,000 in technical assistance & cost share dollars for ag and septic BMPs.
        - Lakes Commission – Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP), $300,000, Renew (Phase 2) NEW
            - $300,000 for agricultural BMPs and technical assistance in the Macatawa Watershed (Phase 1 held by the MACC/ODC)
        - Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership – Lakes Conservation Grant, $100,000, NEW
            - Technical assistance, education/outreach, design and implementation of shoreline protection/restoration & natural shorelines for habitat improvement in Ottawa County Lakes.
        - NFWF 5 Star & Urban Grant: Applied for just under $48,000, NEW
            - support development of the Raindrop Rescue program. Funds will be used to support Lexie's position (wages) and will be used to install native gardens and improved outdoor classrooms in approximately 3 schools and will be used to cost-share green stormwater infrastructure at the Refuge Church.
    - **Preparing:**

        - EGLE Watershed Council Support Grant – Little Black Lake Watershed Management Plan, $40,000, NEW
            - $40,000 for monitoring and the writing/development of a restoration and protection based WMP for the Little Black Lake in Northern Ottawa County.
    - **Executing:** N/A
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MACD conference

- Tracy & Rivka would like to attend the conference. Rivka's funding would come out of OCD budget, Tracy would be paid through groundwater funding. Megan asks the board what kind of budget should we have for board members to attend conferences?
    - Discussion about the value of these conferences. Rivka believed there was a lot of value, networking, planning & ideas. Matt wonders if the conference is worth the cost and time and whether it will actually benefit the district. Doug wants to review the cost but suggests one conference per 4 year term and the consensus is that a policy needs to be put in place. Megan suggests a decision to allow Rivka to attend 2023 summer and then create a policy for the future. Callie mentions that she would also like to attend the Summer Conference
    - **Motion to use OCD funding to pay for two board members to attend summer conference:** Callie Melton **Support:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Vote:** Passes

Board updates: (2 minutes)

Hehl, VanDyke, Grotenrath, Melton, Hodgkinson

CORRESPONDENCE: N/A

PA 116: N/A

ADJOURN – next meeting: July 11th , 2023

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Mathew Hehl