OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Agenda

Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6 pm on Tuesday, Aug. 13th, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: 6:06

Invocation: Matt Hehl

ROLL CALL

Doug Grotenrath- Present
Tim VanDyke - Present
Becky Huttenga - Absent
Rivka Hodgkinson - Absent
Matt Hehl - Present

Matthew Hehl
Sept 10 24

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve agenda and minutes: Tim VanDyke **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes

PUBLIC COMMENT

STAFF AND PARTNERING AGENCY UPDATES

Murielle Garbarinos- 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, Watershed Programs Coordinator - Report
Sarah Bowman, Watershed & Conservation Specialist - Report
Alex Svoboda, RCPP Project Manager - Report
Tracey Weatherwax, Soil Conservation Technician - Report
Ben Savoie, Forester - Report
MDARD - Report

Staff gives brief updates and highlights on their programs.

Executive Director Report - Natalie Bekins

Natalie gives an update on the truck fundraiser, as well as other fundraisers like plant sale, and mentions that 1.5 acres of native seed were sold. She spent time preparing this month's board packet & next month's packet as well as next year's budget, and mentions that staff annual reviews are coming up at the end of August. Other tasks include meeting with the auditor to clean things up and stay on track, and she mentions that we're expecting a federal audit for FY2025 with some additional requirements. Met about MAEAP goals, set up ODC subaward for Ottawa Monitoring, and worked on setting up a workgroup for feedback on NRCS programs - sept 10th.

Monthly Program Highlight: What's in season with produce safety!

Morgan gives a short presentation highlighting one of the farmers she has worked with over the last year. This producer has created a food safety plan, went through the PSA grower training, cost share with a sink for cleaning produce. They're a small/beginning grower and her program works really well for this size of farm, providing cost share, marketability, and guidance for compliance with regulations. Her presentation highlights the importance of networking, establishing trust, and creating relationships with local landowners.

- **Human Resource: -** (H/R Committee)
  - HR Committee Meeting (REPORT)
    - Next meeting we will be working on annual reviews and updated work agreements. Funeral leave policy was updated and revised.
  - Policy Updates
    - Funeral Leave (VOTE)
    - **Motion to approve funeral leave policy:** Doug Grotentrath **Support:** Tim VanDyke
    - **Discussion:** Natalie is asked if hours for funeral leave would be covered by district vs grant funding and Natalie answers that she thinks it would be district. Doug and Tim find the definition of immediate family to be a bit broad, and they question the need for 30 hours vs measuring it in "work days." Natalie mentions that some employees work 10 hour days and that the definitions are based on county guidelines. Natalie mentions that a lot of employees are out of state and travel time was taken into account. Tim and Matt mentionthey would rather see a standard 2 days paid, plus discretionary unpaid leave given by the ED.
    - **Vote:** Tim VanDyke - no, Doug Grotenrath- no. **Motion fails**
    - **Motion to edit the proposed policy from 30 hours to 2 days for funeral leave, and bereavement from 10 hours to 1 day, plus allowances for additional unpaid time at the discretion of the Executive Director for both funeral and bereavement leave:** Doug Grotenrath **Support:** Tim VanDkye
    - **Vote:** Doug Grotenrath - Yes, Tim VanDyke - Yes. **Motion Passes**
  - Kyle Gallagher moving on (UPDATE)
    - Natalie mentions that Kyle Gallagher took a job with the federal government in the DC area to run an invasive species crew.
- **Financial: (**Finance Committee)
  - Finance Committee Meeting (REPORT)
    - Doug mentions that they have been going over the budget and seem to be stuck in the same hole as 2023, and can't put 20k in the bank in October like they wanted. The District is basically operating at a loss every month - spending more money than we're bringing in via indirects/district money prior to receiving reimbursements. The board worries it will hit us hard again in the summer of 2025. These issues are caused by the fact that our programs are mostly reimbursement based - the district isn't actually losing money but we're often carrying costs for months prior to being reimbursed. Tim asks where we could cut spending or increase revenue but Natalie mentions it's difficult, as we're already operating at relatively low costs and we have grant/contract obligations

and deliverables we must meet. She also mentions we can't legally compete with the private sector to increase fee for service type work for additional revenue, and cant borrow money/lines of credit, etc. Jack mentions that these problems are pretty common among other districts but some programs like MAEAP can advance or bill quarterly. He also mentions soliciting funds but that it rarely works well. Doug mentions that Natalie was being overpaid by the district for .50 an hour for 10 weeks accidentally, but that they corrected the error and she will be paying it back. Matt, Doug, and Tim have a short discussion and agree that Natalie should not have to pay the money.

        - **Motion to forgive the $400 bookkeeping mistake of overpayment toward Natalie:** Doug Grotenrath **Support:** Tim VanDyke **Vote:** Passes.
    - July bank reconciliations and bill payment: *See the financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, bill list, and account reconciliations.* (VOTE)
        - **Vote to pay the bills:** TIm VanDyke **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes
    - Cash Flow Forecast
        - Natalie gives a brief explanation of how this forecast works including expected bills/payroll and other expenses as well as reimbursements, when they will be coming in, etc.
    - Appropriations Budget
        - Expenses from FY 24 Oct 1- June 30 (UPDATE)
        - Estimated expenses for final quarter (UPDATE)
        - Updated Appropriations Budget (VOTE)
            - **Motion to approve financial changes to the updated Appropriations Budget:** Doug Grotenrath **Support:** Tim VanDyke **Roll Call Vote:** Doug Grotenrath- Yes, Tim VanDyke - Yes, Matt Hehl - Yes. **Motion Passes.**
    - FY 24 Operating Budget
        - Oct 1- June 30 expenses (UPDATE)
            - Natalie hopes to present this every quarter and has included a table in the board packet that shows actual expenditures vs estimated.
        - Estimated expenses for final quarter (UPDATE)
    - Estimated district revenue includes 100k from the county, 40k from the state, and estimated indirects. Natalie mentions that indirects are based on money you spend - if you don't spend it, you don't get it.
    - Tim asks whether or not we hit the 90k for fee for service treatments? Natlie mentions that she doesn't think we did but won't be sure until all bills for treatment are paid.
- **Operations:**
    - Five-year Long Range Plan (UPDATE)
        - The HR committee meeting discussed this. Natlie mentions that a community needs assessment was done in 2021 in order to form a long range strategic plan, but we really go through it very often - it should be reviewed annually to make sure that it's being followed and met and opportunity is given for changes. She presents an updated chart to go over whether or not we're meeting some of the goals listed in this original plan, based on different focus areas, and discusses how we are going to move forward to make changes and updates.

    - FY 25 Annual Business Plan (UPDATE)
        - Natural resource priorities listed at the top listed with grants supporting those priorities, positions, main goals and objectives, etc.

- Truck fundraising plan (UPDATE)
  - The fundraiser goes till the end of august - flyers to be handed out to the public. Staff made a list of best partners. Newsletter, etc.

- **Grants:**

  - **Preparing:**
    - NFWF (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) Conservation Partners Program - grant intended to increase the amount of regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices on private working lands in priority geographic areas, which includes the Great Lakes Basin through FarmBill programs. Will sustain two existing positions for 3 years. Requesting just over $300,000.

  - **Pending:**
    - CISMA Funding
      -N/A

    - Watershed program
      - Midwest Glacial Lakes Lake Conservation Grant - Two-year grant requesting funds to support a shoreline naturalization technical assistance and cost-share program with accompanying water quality monitoring for Spring Lake and Crockery Lake. Request for $99,673.48 to support watershed staff, monitoring supplies, and landowner cost share.

  - **Executing:**
    - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - for Hemlock woolly adelgid treatments. Request for $200,000.
    - Landscape Scale Restoration - for Hemlock woolly adelgid treatment in Oceana, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Allegan. Fund implementation of HWA management workshops in counties from Allegan to Grand Traverse Counties. Facilitate the installation of browse exclosures to encourage natural regeneration. The request is for $400,000.
    - EGLE 319 NPS for Sand Creek & Crockery Creek (Phase 2) - Two year grant to continue the Sand Creek & Crockery Creek project. Request for nearly $600,000 in funding for wages, technical assistance, septic & agricultural best management practices.

  - **Not received:**
    - N/A

Board updates: (2 minutes)
Hehl, VanDyke, Grotenrath, Huttenga, Hodgkinson

Jack Knorek - MDARD Report: A monthly report is provided in the packet but he gives highlights. The department has a contract with an auditing firm that can help with quickbooks questions for districts and he provides a link to this firm. MDARD is offering 28k per farm for up to 20 farms that were impacted by avian flu. Comp time - state law states 1.5 hours for every hour over 40 hours but most district's have been paying 1:1.

Tim: He says thank you for the card after the last meeting and shares that he went to McBane for a meeting and noticed wildflowers and pollinators in the median along the highway. This is great to see and the OCD should be more involved with projects like this.

Doug: He has been spending a lot of time with finances over the last month.

Matt: He has been very busy on the farm but he mentions that everywhere he goes including events or meetings he is starting to hear and see positive things about the district.

CORRESPONDENCE: N/A
PA 116:

- Wright Township

ADJOURN – next meeting: September 10th, 2024, 6 PM

Motion to adjourn: Tim VanDyke **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** pass