OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

Minutes

Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6 pm on Tuesday, August 12th, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 6:06
ROLL CALL:
Rivka Hodgkinson - Present
Becky Huttenga - Present
Doug Grotenrath- Present
Matt Hehl - Present
Tim VanDyke - Present

Matthew Hehl
Sept 9, 25

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES
APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve minutes and agenda as written: Rivka Hodgkinson **Support:** Becky Huttenga **vote:** passes

PUBLIC COMMENT

STAFF 2 MIN HIGHLIGHTS
Staff gives brief highlights of their programs and accomplishments.

QUESTIONS ON BOARD REPORTS

Murielle Garbarinos- CISMA Coordinator – Report Will Latham- Invasive Species Specialist - Report Morgan Anderson- Produce Safety Technician - Report Forest Pest Technicians - Report *(Missing)* Ben Jordan, Watershed Programs Coordinator - Report Sarah Bowman, Watershed & Conservation Specialist - Report

Meghan Bannink, RCPP Project Manager - Report Tracey Weatherwax, Soil Conservation Technician - Report Andrew Booher - CTAP/MAEAP Coordinator Ben Savoie, Forester - Report Annaleese Rasanen - Bookkeeper Report MDARD - Report

PARTNER UPDATES

NRCS - Staff has been working on several approved and pre approved applications, obligating contracts, attending events, & trying to beat deadlines for the new fiscal year. Payments to farmers this quarter were about 244k.

MDARD - Report included. The state does not have a fy26 budget yet but CD's can tentatively plan on 40k operating budgets with a possible 10k increase.

CTAP and produce safety funding (read report/watch video).

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Executive Director Report -

The monthly ED report was provided to the board and includes highlights.

- Starting to work on appropriations budget & will have budget for review for the next meeting. OCD will need to post for public comments/hearing.
- Wrote and submitted multiple grants including two that could fund Tracey - TA grant focussed on pollinators/native plantings & support for CSP and EQIP. Roughly 1 million in potential funding. • Working with the watershed team on a potential county-wide BMP program through the Water Resources Commissioners Department & additiona funding streams including t-shirt sales at local vendors.
- Identifying resources that would help including 501c3 access (through MACD). Staff need training, mileage, etc but have lost a lot of supportive training from NRCS especially with soil health training.

Monthly Program Highlight: CTAP - Andrew Booher

Andrew gives his report for July, which includes lots of training and various events/planning for events. He mentions that re-vers and new verifications might be a little low because of his start date and how long it takes to get out into the field & meet folks/get onto farms. He mentions that the Mistrips event was a MAEAP phase 1 event.

- **Financial: (**Finance Committee)
  - o Finance Committee Meeting (REPORT)
    - ▪ Jamie covered most of what was covered at the meeting. The board asks for a copy of the current budget so input can be made. A draft will be given to the board prior to the September meeting.
  - o May bank reconciliations and bill payment: *See the financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, bill list, and checking account reconciliation.* (VOTE)
    - ▪ **Motion to pay bills:** Becky Huttenga **Support:** Rivka Hodgkinson
    - ▪ **Discussion:** Jamie mentions that the monthly balance is negative due to waiting on reimbursements for grants/cost share, etc. All the money is accounted for.
    - ▪ **Roll call vote:** Tim VanDyke - Yes, Becky Huttenga- Yes, Doug Grotenrath- Yes ▪ Vote Passes
  - o Cash Flow Forecast - Explanation (Jamie)
    - ▪ 144k deficit already explained
  - o Account Migration - Check Forgery (Jamie)
    - ▪ Jamie mentions that, as previously discussed, there was a check forgery & we may need to switch banks or accounts.
  - o MDARD Recommended Appropriations Process/Requirements (Jamie)
  - o In/Out Lines - Plant/Tree Sale, Retail Tshirts Sales, Cultivating Resilience (Jamie) ▪ Will establish in/out lines in the budget for Plant/tree sale, other sales and events so we know exactly what those categories are bringing in & spending.
  - o Stipend reinstatement for Annaleese w/ backpay for June/July - $3400 EOFY (VOTE) ▪ **Motion to pay stipend reinstatement for Annaleese w/backpay:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Support:** Doug Grotenrath
    - ▪ **Discussion:** Tim asks for details on this item. Doug mentions that Annaleese has been continuing to do tasks that were her responsibility during the interim

period & essentially doing more work than she signed on for.

- **Roll call Vote:** Doug - yes, Becky - yes, Tim - yes, Rivka - yes.
- Vote passes

- **Human Resource: -** (H/R Committee)
  - o HR Committee Meeting (REPORT)
    - The HR committee did not meet but recognizes the need to start meeting again soon to review policies, employee reviews, etc.
    - Executive Director (90 Day)
  - o Work Agreements
    - Brendan Canavan - Forest Pest Specialist
      - **Motion to approve work agreement as written:** Rivka Hodgkinson **Support:** Becky Huttenga
      - **Roll Call Vote:** Becky - Yes, Tim - abstain, Rivka - yes, Doug - yes
  - o Policy
    - Board Involvement in Reviews
      - In the past board members have sat in on employee reviews. Since they're not involved in day to day operations, Jamie asks if the board likes to participate, is it helpful, what value added is there? Becky mentions it might be helpful for board members to see the process of ED reviewing employees. Jack says it's fairly uncommon for this to happen in other districts. Matt mentions that if a board member WANTS to be involved they should have the option & gives them a chance to connect. Jamie and Rivka mention that having a board member present might be a limiting factor - it doesn't feel comfortable to discuss some issues because a board member might be there and might misconstrue it? Jamie recommends a post review process where he could curate to the board what might have been discussed (short report per person?). HR committee to review section 14 for policy changes - employee review.

- **Operations:**
  - o MACD - Board President Election - District Letter of Support for Jerry Miller ▪ Bylaws of MACD require election of officers. Each needs three letters of support to run.
    - **Motion to write a letter of support for Jerry:** Becky Huttenga **Support:** Tim VanDyke
    - **Discussion:** Jamie asks what the signature requirements would be. LOR from board would require Matt's signature.
    - **Vote:** Passes. Rivka Hodgkinson abstains from vote.

  - o Discussion MACD - Membership Increase (Please Review Benefits Sheet) (VOTE) ▪ **Motion to increase MACD dues to advanced member level for 2026:** Becky

Huttenga **Support:** Tim VanDyke

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- Discussion: This would move us from $650 to $1,300 with additional benefits to advanced level. Jamie mentions that advanced level would give us free access to 501c3 status and, currently, the cost per grant application and donation pass through is $100. Would likely make up the membership difference in the number of grants applied for throughout a given year. We would also save $$ on quickbooks discounts & canva membership by upgrading. MACD is heavily involved in advocacy and lobbying efforts to secure more funding and a place at various tables.
- **Vote:** Doug- no, Becky - yes, Tim - no, Rivka - Abstain.
- Vote fails
- **Motion to support MACD at $650:** Doug Grotenrath **Support:** TIm VanDyke ▪ **Discussion:** Jamie - part of the reason he was brought in was to raise money & has a long history of writing grants/getting donations leveraging a 501c3 status. Becky mentions we can track $$ spent on applications and when we surpass $650 we can revisit this and discuss upping membership level for the following year.
- **Vote:** Becky - Yes, Tim - Yes, Doug - yes, Rivka - Abstain.
- Vote passes

o MACD - Director Training Invite (See email)

- Training that MACD is offering for directors. Jamie just asks directors to review. MACD & MDARD offered these routinely before covid. Grant funding through MDARD including stipends for directors to attend.

o MDARD Operations Elements Review - Special meeting needed (2 Directors) or included in the next board meeting for the entire board?

In person review w/ Jack K. 9am Thursday Sept 25th.

o MERS - Changes to Plan Administration - Quarterly Distribution/Post Tax Distribution ▪ Quick update - original setup involved per pay period distribution. After discussing this we will be doing a quarterly post tax. This will be easier and more in line with the current system.

o NRCS/OCD Working Group - August 27th - 4-5:30pm

- For information - board members are invited to this.

o Alex Svoboda - MDARD Regen Ag. Presentation - Sept. 9th Board Meeting ▪ Next board meeting Alex will be presenting for the board on the Regen Ag program.

- **Grants:**

o **Preparing:**

- Technical Assistance
  - NACD TA Collaboration w/ NRCS - $27M available - Pending RFP
- Watershed Program

- County Proposal (Monsanto Fund) - $4.7M available - County Wide Investment in Watershed Health, Point Source Prevention and Land

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/Water Improvements. A holistic approach to watershed improvement and sustainability. Will include staffing funds (Ben, Sarah, Annaleese, Tracey(?) and district administered cost share that gives the community access to implementation funds. Potential ask of **$500-750K over 2years.**

o Pending:

- Technical Assistance
  - NFWF - Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Conservation Fund (MBPCF) - This grant will develop a technical assistance program and shovel ready implementation project for the high need, high demand county wide desire for a pollinator and native plant support program. The project is a collaboration between the County, ODC, Parks, Local Churches and Nonprofits. The project will fund Tracey W. and Annaleese(.25). for 2 years. **Requesting: $299,865.50 Indirects @ 14% = $42,000.00** (Notice expected Dec.)
  - NFWF - Conservation Partners Program (CPP) - This grant will extend our technical assistance support with NRCS by maintaining a staff member that can help local farmers/producers learn about and engage EQUIP and CSP programs. The project will fund Meghan B. for 3 years and offset some of Jamie R. and Annaleese R. salary expenses. In the event NFWF MBPCF is not granted Jamie and Annaleese R. funds can shift to Tracey W. **Requesting: $547,418.09 Indirects @ 14% = $67,226.78 - Additional Inclusions: $41,406** (Software/Computers/Cell Phones) - (Notice expected Dec/Jan.)
- CISMA Funding
  - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (CWMA)- This grant will continue the surveillance and treatment of European Frog Bit in the West Michigan area as well as increase outreach and education to youth about the spread of this species. **Requesting $82,965.** (Notice expected in March/April 2026)
  - Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) - This grant will fund retreatments of bittersweet, phragmites, and knotweed in specific watersheds in the CISMA service area. This is a continuation and slight expansion of a current project (including one new watershed). **Requesting $293,000.** (Notice expected in September/October 2025).

o Executing:

- 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. Funds to support watershed staff, monitoring supplies, and landowner cost share. **Requested $99,673.48, received $68,385.**

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

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

Becky - Encourages everyone to attend Oddside ales on Sat 16th at 5pm. Beer release using a native plant!

Doug - N/A

Tim - Asks about a small no-till drill for ditch/flower planting.

Matt - Interview with Senator Huizenga on the farm in August!

Rivka - Great region 7 meeting. Voted on resolution for cover crops. Districts shared updates. MDARD provided reports, etc.

CORRESPONDENCE:
PA 116:

- Polkton Township - Koppenel Farms

ADJOURN – next meeting: September 9th , 2025, 6 PM

Motion to adjourn: Tim VanDyke **Support:** Doug Grotenrath **Vote:** Passes
Meeting adjourned

Sept 29 7PM