OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

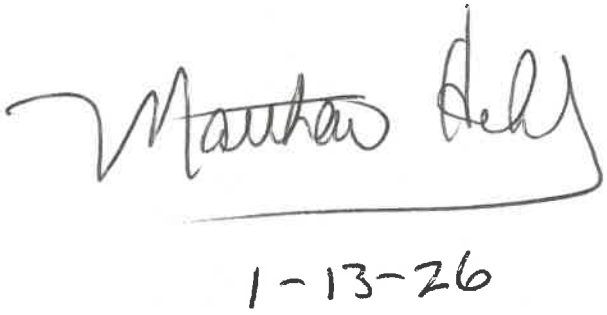
OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes
Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6 pm on Thursday, December 4th, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 6:03pm

ROLL CALL

Rivka Hodgkinson- present
Becky Huttenga- present
Doug Grotenrath- present
Tim VanDyke- present
Matt Hehl- absent



1-13-26

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion for approval of the minutes: Tim **Support:** Rivka

Discussion:

- Rivka: What is our policy for internal record keeping retention for digital media? Asking for recorded meetings, and not as picky about minutes because we have recording to refer to. Where else are the meeting recordings stored besides Youtube? Staff responds that they can look into backing up video.

Vote: motion approved

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda: Doug **Support:** Rivka **Vote**: Motion approved

PUBLIC COMMENT

Member of the Public: Amanda Bartee, lives in Grand Haven/Robinson township. Her company donated to the Giving Tuesday donation, and she had a phone conversation with Rivka.

QUESTIONS ON BOARD REPORTS– not submitted for this meeting. Once compiled, will be sent via email digitally later in the month.

Murielle Garbarinos- CISMA Coordinator – Report
Will Latham- Invasive Species Specialist - Report
Morgan Anderson- Produce Safety Technician - Report
Forest Pest Technicians - Report
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
NRCS -Report (Absent)

- **Human Resource:**
  - Temporary Replacement for Annaleese (Vote)
    - **Board motions to approve the position to hire Ciera Hokstra as Admin assistant part time temp:** Doug. **Support:** Tim.
    - **Discussion**:
    - Tim: Is there current staff willing and able to take on this task?

- Ben: Original idea was to have Tracey do the work, but it would be difficult due to the timing of certain grant awards & she would prefer not to.
- Rivka: Annaleese's maternity leave may be charged to grants, as per the grant agreements. With additional staff AND maternity leave, is there enough budget within the grant?
- Ben: Since Ben will bill roughly 20 hours less of his time to watershed grants/funding sources there is certainly room to bill a portion of Ciera's hours to those grants too.
- Rivka: Concerned that Ciera has no experience working with billing and reconciling specifically for grants given the resume. We haven't tried putting open posting for this position or trying to reach out to other people who contract for other districts. Could Ciera do more of the basic admin tasks or office tasks to free up time for ED to take over financial management? Or could we look into contractors?
- Doug: Could we get someone local to take care of everyday accounting? Would Natalie be interested in doing it?
- Ben: Ciera is familiar with OCD programs and grants, and the structure of how grants work even if not directly through financial management. He is worried that there isn't enough time to post the job or look for contractors AND allow them to work with/train with Annaleese prior to leaving. Neighboring districts can provide assistance but couldn't necessarily take over 15-20 hours worth of work.
- Becky: Uncomfortable with this decision because it doesn't promote resiliency, and other districts have offered to help for the critical tasks. She would rather see existing staff learn how to do some of these tasks.
- Ben: Will sit in on training sessions with Annaleese, and do it with her. Ben will assist with reconciling the bank account.
- Rivka: Would like to see the work agreement with an end date, or to clarify that it ends when Annaleese returns from maternity leave.
- Tim: Lets see how it works out in 2 weeks and have a backup of hiring a consultant.
- Annaleese requested to speak on tasks and training: List of tasks would be manageable for Ciera. Account receivable & payable, pay bills, reconciling, payroll.
- Becky: What about W9s, 1099s, etc.?
- Annaleese: quickbooks does most tax prep automatically including 1099s, and she was able to consult with Nadene last year for any questions she had.
- Ben: Willing to take on more critical tasks, instead of having Ciera do them for sake of correctness and resilience. Will make sure time is taken to do double checks.
- The board feels comfortable if Ciera reaches out to Rivka for help as well.
- **Vote**: Roll Call
- Rivka: Yes

- Doug: Yes
- Tim: Yes
- Becky: Yes
- **Motion passes**

- Work Agreements
  - Ciera Hoekstra - Administrative Assistant (part time/temp)
    - **Board makes motion to accept Ciera's work agreement as amended:** Rivka
    - **Support**: Doug
    - **Vote:** Roll Call
    - Doug: Yes
    - Tim: Yes
    - Rivka: Yes
    - Becky: Yes
    - **Motion Passes**
  - Benjamin Jordan - Acting Executive Director
  - Sarah Bowman - Watershed Specialist
  - **Board makes motion to approve work agreements as a group for Ben & Sarah:** Doug
    - **Support**: Tim
  - **Vote**: Roll Call
    - Doug: Yes
    - Tim: Yes
    - Rivka: Yes
    - Becky: Yes
    - **Motion Passes**
- Policy
  - Holiday Schedule/Early-off closure & inclement weather
  - Discussion:
    - Ben's context: Federal early leave is inconsistent, and made policy due to excessive giving in the past. No early offs the next few years, leave us for 16 hours that doesn't get used. Amendment to that or temp exclusion for this year. Can we use 8/16 hours to give xmas eve off?
    - Rivka: For future amendments to the policy: want to see amended policy and not ad hoc policy.
  - **Motion is to Close office form Dec 24th through Dec 26th and Wed Dec 31st - Jan 2nd, while also authorizing Ben to authorize the 16 hours early off as flex time between now and end of calendar year:** Rivka
  - **Support:** Doug
  - **Vote**: Board approved the motion
- RCPP - Change signature authority on grant reimbursements (Vote)
  - **Board makes motion to change signing authority on RCPP from Jamie to Ben:** Rivka

- **Support**: Tim
- **Motion approved**

- **Financial:** (Finance Committee)
  - November bank reconciliations and bill payment: *See the financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, bill list, and checking account reconciliation.* (VOTE)
    - **Board makes motion to pay the bills:** Rivka
    - **Support**: Tim
    - Discussion
      - Rivka: Asks for a "budget to actual" update. The board agrees that quarterly updates would suffice.
      - Annaleese: We can create a budget to actual at the end of the quarter, and continue it moving forward.
    - **Vote**: roll call for approval of motion
    - Rivka: yes
    - Doug: yes
    - Tim: Yes
    - Becky: Yes
    - **Motion Passes**
  - Cash Flow Forecast - Explanation (Annaleese)
    - January is not there because I haven't billed and done reimbursements for the first quarter yet. Things have moved due to shutdown, CTAP clarification and approval hopefully soon.
    - No questions from board
  - Chase Credit Card - Procedure for canceling previous card (with Natalie's name) and starting new card
    - Annaleese: The credit card we have is no longer offered and we were grandfathered in, which is why we can't switch the new authorizing officer on it. So we can get new cards, and then can switch authorized users that they can manage and have a new set of terms. Have to apply with a copy of the minutes that x person was voted for authorizing officer and all paper work is in order so is not bounced back for any reason.
    - The board would prefer to have two authorizing officers.
    - **Motion to select Ink Business Unlimited Credit and for Ben Jordan and Annaleese Rasanen as authorized officers:** Rivka
    - **Support:** Becky
    - Discussion:
      - The board discusses options and agree that the middle card seems to be the best pick given the amount we spend and cash back offers.
      - Rivka: Have Murielle still get her own card because it makes sense functionally.
  - **Vote**: Roll Call
    - Tim: Yes
    - Doug: Yes
    - Rivka: Yes
    - Becky: Yes
    - **Motion Passes**

- **Operations:**
  - Vehicle Maintenance Update
    - Ben gives context: Three of the trucks need breaks and one was involved in a fender bender. We're pretty close to appropriations for vehicle maintenance. The board explains that this line item falls within district ops and we can continue to spend on maintenance if needed so long as the total ops budget isn't exceeded.
    - Tim: Should we run one vehicle more often to "wear it out" so we don't have to worry about serious maintenance or replacing multiple vehicles at once?
    - Doug: Murielle talks like we are going down in staff, and so do we need three trucks? Don't need to talk about it now, but something to think about. Used value has gone up.

- **Grants:**
  - **Preparing:**
    - Watershed Program
      - County Proposal (Monsanto Fund) - $4.7M available - County Wide Investment in Watershed Health, Point Source Prevention and Land /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 **$699,899K over 2 years**.
  - **Pending:**
    - Technical Assistance
      - 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.)
      - NACD TA Collaboration w/ NRCS - $27M available (Notice expected March)
      - Michigan Craft Beverage Council Research Proposal - Integrating Native and Invasive Plants into Microbrewing: Assessing Market Demand and Educational Impact: Project evaluates the production feasibility and market potential of using native and invasive Michigan plants as craft beer ingredients, filling a research gap at the intersection of brewing innovation and ecological sustainability. **1 year grant requesting $40,000.**
    - 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)

- **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.**

- **Not received:**

  Got the notice and it was a no: 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.)

  Rivka: Any areas where there is a funding gap that I should keep our eyes open?
  Ben: Yes for Meghan, RCPP ends Sept 10th 2026. Have a running list, like DNR habitat stuff.
  Becky: There's a whole bunch of funding streams that got pulled from agencies and into community projects funds and specific legislators. Came up in March and April. Will send Ben a link, and will come through Hillary Scholten's office.
  Doug: Did you get any list of grants Jamie was working on?
  Ben: I only have a list of what he applied for. But can look through to see if there is a running list. Forward emails into one inbox.

Board updates: (2 minutes)
Hehl: absent
VanDyke: new ED designates someone to get a new clock?
Grotenrath: Got mediated meeting at the end of the Month, Dec 22nd.
Huttenga: Meeting room E= go to the lower lobby, go left, and go all the way down.
Hodgkinson: putting suggested times for different discussion items to keep meetings rolling.
Excited for the MACD conference! 66 CDs, MDARD, NRCS are going to be there.

CORRESPONDENCE:
N/A

ADJOURN – next meeting: TBD - Jan 13, 2026, 6 PM
CORRECTION: Jan 13th

- Make an agenda item at the next meeting to adjust day/time instead of Tues at 6pm.

Adjourned at 7:41pm