OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes
Annual Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6:30pm on April 14, 2026

BKWebb 5/12/26

CALL TO ORDER: 6:31
ROLL CALL
Rivka Hodgkinson - Here
Tim VanDyke - Here
Kelly Goward - Here
Doug Grotenrath - Here
Becky Huttenga - Here
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES
APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion to approve minutes & agenda as presented : Rivka **Support:** Becky
Vote - motion passes

PUBLIC COMMENT
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
Ben Jordan - Acting Executive Director - Report
Sarah Bowman, Watershed & Conservation Specialist - Report
Meghan Bannink, RCPP Project Manager - Report
Tracey Weatherwax, Soil Conservation Technician - Report
Ximena Figuroa - CTAP/MAEAP Coordinator
Ben Savoie, Forester - Report
Annaleese Rasanen - Bookkeeper Report
MDARD - Report
NRCS -Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT (See written report)
PARTNER REPORTS (NRCS/MDARD) - NRCS DC Ibrahima Kane gave a short update. Focusing on EQIP ranking this month, CSP shortly after. 23 apps for eqip, 6 csp apps for fy 26.

GUEST: Kelly RIce (Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission)

Motion to write an OCD letter of support for the Parks Millage: Rivka **Support:** Kelly
Discussion: Becky provided a comment that it's usually good for the district to not to choose a side in potentially partisan/political discussions and that, while Parks are a great partner to the district, are our goals directly in line with theirs? Rivka mentions that since it is a nonpartisan issue it may be ok to support the millage. She would have loved to see a joint millage but maybe that's an opportunity for the future and there are other opportunities for district staff to support the park. Doug is concerned at what this letter might be used for, and about the OCD being tied to a campaign to "raises taxes"
Vote - Rivka - yes, Tim - no, Kelly - yes, Doug - no, Becky - no.
Motion fails.

- **Board Governance**
  - Officer nominations & Elections
    - **Nominations for chair person -**
      - Rivka nominates Becky for chair. **Support:** Doug
    - **Vote:** Passes - Becky is Chair
    - **Nominations for vice chair**
      - Doug nominates Kelly.
      - Rivka nominates Tim. He does not accept the nomination
      - Rivka nominates Doug.
      - **Vote:**
        - Rivka - Doug
        - Tim - Kelly
        - Kelly - Doug
        - Doug - Kelly
        - Becky - Doug
        - Doug confirmed as Vice Chair

    - **Nominations for treasurer/secretary**
      - Rivka nominates Kelly
        - Rivka - yes
        - Kelly - Yes
        - Doug - yes
        - Becky - yes
        - Kelly confirmed as treasurer

- **Human Resource:**
  - Update on grants & gap funding for Tracey's position
    - Tracey's position is still being funded through a variety of grants as we wait for the NACD grant announcement. Kelly asks how long we can sustain funding for Tracey without NACD, Ben said we don't have a final end date, but we're currently very comfortable with funding in current grants, especially with Ben drawing less on watershed stuff.
  - ED Position (Discussion)
    - Ben's temporary work agreement ends around May 24th or so since December. Ben has expressed that he would like to to stay in the role permanently and would like a decision to be made sooner rather than later.
    - Rivka's research says that there are no policies requiring an open job posting process unless we have an internal policy. Rivka wonders if there are any requirements through grant agreements/contracts?
    - A discussion is had about a conditional appointment pending a review of all grant/project agreements.

- **Motion to conditionally approve Ben's permanent appointment to the ED role contingent on review of grant agreements.** Tim **Support:** Rivka
- **Discussion:** Rivka wants to ensure we come up with a succession plan for potential future applicants when/if Ben ever leaves.
- **Vote:** Motion passes
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- ISS Hiring and New HWA Hire
  - **Motion to accept work agreement for Ashley Golightly as written:** Kelly **Support:** Rivka
  - **Vote:** Rivka - yes, Tim - yes, Kelly - yes, Doug - yes, Becky - yes. Motion passes

- **Financial:**
  - March 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 the bills:** Rivka **Support.** Kelly
    - **Vote:** Doug - yes, kelly - yes, tim - yes, rivka - yes, becky - yes. Motion passed.
  - Cash Flow Forecast - Explanation (Ben & Annaleese)
  - FY26 Appropriations & budget to actual (Discussion) - Short discussion about current budget & potential need for amendments in future meetings.
  - Additional "Committee Stipend" for employees
    - We have a $500 end of year committee stipend to compensate staff for extra district committee work they participate in. We had some turnover in staff so we didn't use all of our committee stipend budget item and we are well under budget on operations. Ben is proposing to use the rest of the committee stipend budget ($1,500) and double that by taking another $1,500 from another line in the operation budget where we are under.
    - **Motion to approve a $3000 allocation to the committee stipends for a one time stipend as per Ben's recommendation.** Rivka **Support:** Becky
    - Discussion: Short discussion about which staff should be included and how much each person shall receive. Ben says it would be for the staff who were working during the election and would exclude Annaleese, Ximena, Ashley and himself. $350 a person and $200 to Ciera.
    - **Vote:** Kelly - yes, Tim - no, Rivka - yes, Doug - yes, Becky - yes. Motion passes.

  - Banking - Authorized reps & signer update (Discussion and VOTE).
    - Ben provides a sample letter that needs to be put on district letterhead that would be used to add or subtract official signers to accounts. Identify who you want to add to which accounts and also identify who you want to remove and from what accounts. Each person who is being added to accounts needs to fill out a form and provide information.
    - **Motion to remove Doug Grotenrath and Matt Hehl from accounts and add Chair Rebecca Weavers and Treasurer Kelly Goward to accounts.** Rivka **Support:** Tim
    - **Roll call vote:** Tim - yes, Kelly - yes, Doug - yes, Rivka - yes, Becky - yes. Motion passes.

- **Operations:**
  - Tree & Plant Sale (Update) - District has sold over 10k trees and sale is Friday April 17.

- District Office Hours - staff would love to convert Fridays to appointment only rather than have it as a public open day.
- **Motion to make office open on Friday by appointment only:** Rivka **Support:** Kelly
- **Vote:** Motion Passes

- **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 2years.**
      - Central Ottawa Phase 2 (EGLE 319) - Phase 2 for our Central Ottawa Watershed Restoration Program. TA and cost share for Ag & residential practices to reduce NPS pollution. OCD staff is in the process of preparing this application. **Requesting roughly $600,000 over 2 years.**

  Pending:
    - Technical Assistance
      - NACD TA Collaboration w/ NRCS - $27M available (Notice expected April-May)
      - Build Strong (TC Energy) - Funding requested to provide technical assistance to landowners and businesses looking to replace turfgrass or install native landscaping. The purpose of this project is to increase biodiversity, create pollinator habitat, reduce irrigation demand and increase water infiltration. It would cover TA and cost share for native landscaping projects. **$105,625.00 over 1 year.**
      - 2026 Planet Award (Consumers Energy) - The goal of the Native Plant Program is to provide technical assistance, cost share, and outreach to landowners in Ottawa County who want to improve their soil, improve biodiversity, and reduce their water usage by planting native plants on their land. TA and cost share would be available for project implementation. **$247,768 over 2 years.**

    - 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)
      - EGLE sub-award for European Frog-bit in order to fund treatment over the next two years. EGLE holds the funding for the project but multiple CISMAs are bidding for the sub-award. **Requesting $45,567.52**

- Watershed Program
  - MiCorps Volunteer Stream Monitoring (MiCorps) - This is a follow up to our MiCorps startup grant. Funding for time, mileage, and supplies to implement a volunteer stream monitoring program throughout Ottawa County. **Requesting $19,977.04.**

- **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.**
  - CISMA
    - Grand Haven Area Community Foundation Impact Grant - This grant will fund the Invasive Species Specialist position for two years in order to assist municipalities in the Tri-Cities with Invasive species needs. **Requesting $34,073.05**
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  - Outreach & Education
    - MDARD Regenerative Agricultural Education & Outreach - 1 year grant to help fund outreach events & workshops targeting Ottawa County farmers & producers. Some of this funding will be used for our annual Cultivating Resilience event. **Request and Received $15,000.**
    - MDARD Regenerative Farmer Network Grant (MDARD RAP) - This grant is to establish a "farmer network" which will work to incorporate regenerative ag practices into their farms, share resources, hold outreach events and workshops, etc. It involves TA for OCD staff, funding for materials and workshops, and cost share for farmers to incorporate these practices. **$45,000 awarded.**

- **Not received:**

  N/A

Board updates: (2 minutes)

- **Goward** - none
- **VanDyke** - Tim welcomes Kelly to the board. He expresses concerns about the lack of farmers on board. The backbone of America is agriculture and he wants to ensure they are appropriately included.
- **Grotenrath** - Doug mentions he thinks we should have a finance committee still in the future.
- **Huttenga** - Works with a lot of OCD staff due to her current job. And she looks forward to leveraging that relationship as a board member more in the future.
- **Hodgkinson** - She's looking forward to serving four more years, she would like to have associate board members in the future.

CORRESPONDENCE:

ADJOURN – next meeting: May 12, 2026 at 6:30pm - adjourned at 8:53 pm