OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes

Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6:30pm on May 12, 2026

6/9/2026

CALL TO ORDER

- Call to order at 6:31 PM

ROLL CALL

- **Present:** Doug Grotenrath, Tim VanDyke, Becky Huttenga
- **Present Online (nonvoting):** Kelly Goward
- **Not Present:** Rivka Hodgkinson

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- **Motion to accept April minutes and May agenda:** Doug Grotenrath **Support:** Tim VanDyke All **Vote:** Motion passes

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

QUESTIONS ON BOARD REPORTS

Murielle Garbarinos- CISMA Coordinator – 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 Figueroa - CTAP/MAEAP Coordinator
Ben Savoie, Forester - Report
Annaleese Rasanen - Bookkeeper Report
MDARD - Report
NRCS -Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT (See written board report)

- Becky asked a question about the CTAP grant timeline. Ben mentions that the current CTAP grant is one year and the new one due June 5th is a 3 year grant.

- **Board Governance**
  - Board Committees & Appointments (Discussion & vote)
    - Becky states that the Finance and HR committees still exist, they just stopped meeting for a while.
      - Doug thinks the Finance committee is beneficial for additional guidance to the Executive Director and for the Treasurer to stay informed and suggests the Chair and Treasurer should be on it.
      - Kelly asked if there were "job descriptions" for board committees and it's explained that they exist in the handbook.
      - **Becky suggests we move forward with continuing the Finance Committee, but rely on the Executive Director (Ben) for Human Resources. However it would be good to identify a Board Liaison for each staff member in case there are Executive Director issues in the**

future. ED can also just ask the full Board for a Board representative for future position interviews.

- **The chair historically has assigned committee members. Becky appoints Kelly and Doug as the Finance Committee after consensus from the Board.**

- **Human Resource:**
  - Invasive Species Specialist Hiring update
    - Ben gives an update on the ISS position and welcomes Brendan Canavan as the new ISS.
  - Work Agreements (Discussion & vote)
    - Ben Jordan - Executive Director
      - **Motion to approve the updated work agreement and appoint Ben Jordan as the Executive Director**: Tim **Support**: Doug
      - **Discussion:** Ben exhaustively checked all grant agreements and didn't find any language stating the need for a public posting vs appointment. Becky and Rivka made some minor adjustments to the work agreement prior to the meeting.
      - **Vote:** All present vote yes and the motion passes.
    - Murielle Garbarino - WM CISMA Coordinator
      - **Motion to approve the updated work agreement:** Tim **Support:** Doug
        - Discussion: This is just an annual raise ($1.50) as CISMA is on a different schedule compared to the rest of the office staff.
      - **Vote:** All present vote yes and the motion passes
    - Brendan Canavan - Invasive Species Specialist
      - **Motion to approve work agreement:** Doug **Support:** Tim
      - **Discussion:** $22/ hour new position with an internal hire. Work agreement just needs to be updated to match the 6 hour per pay period annual leave accrual.
      - **Vote:** All present vote yes and the motion passes
    - Sean Fitzgerald - Forest Pest Technician
      - **Motion to approve work agreement:** Doug **Support:** Tim
      - **Discussion:** This is another annual raise ($0.50) as CISMA is on a different schedule. Sean has now hit the max cap pay for the Forest Pest Technician position.
      - **Vote:** All present vote yes and the motion passes

- **Financial:**
  - April bill payment: See financial packet for bills list (Vote)
    - **Motion to pay the bills:** Doug **Support:** Tim
    - Discussion: Board members asked for clarification about a few specific bills paid and staff answered.
    - **Roll call vote**: Doug votes aye, Tim votes Aye, Becky votes aye. Motion passed, bills paid.

- April financials & bank reconciliations: See *the financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, and checking account reconciliation*
- Cash Flow Forecast - Explanation (Ben & Annaleese)
  - Doug let the Board know that they transferred $92,000 from savings to checking to cover a few pay periods just in case anything goes wrong with signatures for transferring Treasurer/bank duties. This will go back to savings if not used or will just be used for the following pay period.
  - Becky asked a clarifying question on the $11,000 "administration" item on the Produce Safety grant - Ben explained that PST grants no longer have "indirects" but they have administration time that the Executive Director or financial Specialist can charge time too.
- FY27 Appropriations Process & timeline
  - The Executive Director just wanted to bring the appropriations budget timeline to the board members' mind to meet the appropriations timeline. July will be the month the board will start working together on a new appropriation budget.
- Audit update
  - OCD passed their recent audit. Audit report received April 30th and was sent to MDARD. The next audit will take place in 2027.

- **Operations:**
  - Tree & Plant Sale Update
    - OCD earned $27K in gross income from the annual tree sale, amounting to $17K net income. OCD purchased just over 13,000 trees and nearly all were sold with a few donations at the end. Staff updated tree pricing to create 5 pricing categories vs individual tree prices and to ensure pricing is aligned with neighboring Districts.
  - County funding request (Discussion)
    - Ben met with Paul Sachs from Ottawa County DSI for preliminary discussions on a renewal and potential increase of our operational contract with Ottawa County (Currently receive $120,000 total; $100,000 for overhead administrative and $20,000 for groundwater related work).There may be an opportunity to increase the groundwater fund from DSI and Ben provided a few options to DSI on what we could do with an increase in funds ($20,000 or $30,000 increase potential).
- **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)**
  - Consumers Energy Foundation Application -- Funding requested to support an OCD Native Plant Program 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. **Requested $94,025.80 total.**
  - 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.**

- 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)

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.**
  - 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 (macroinvertebrate sampling) throughout Ottawa County. **Received $19,250.00**
- 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. **Received $34,073.05**
  - 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. **Received $45,567.52**

- 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. **Requested 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:**
  - Technical Assistance
    - 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.**

Board updates: (2 minutes)
Kelly Goward - Was in Marquette for MI Envirothon competition during the Board meeting, 10 schools participated this year (15 teams), Envirothon is mostly coordinated by Conservation Districts.
Tim VanDyke - Asked about historical photos in the conference room, OCD has a lot of historical photos and documents that were organized by a historian a few years back that staff wanted to put up.
Doug Grotenrath - Has just been assisting with Payroll transfers
Becky Huttenga - None.
RivkaHodgkinson (N/A)

CORRESPONDENCE: None

ADJOURN – Adjourned at 7:39.

Next meeting: June 09, 2026 at 6:30pm