OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes

Regular Meeting, USDA Service Center, Grand Haven MI
6:30pm on Sept 8, 2026

CALL TO ORDER at 6:34 PM

ROLL CALL - All present (Becky Huttenga, Rivka Hodgkinson, Doug Grotenrath, Tim VanDyke, Kelly Goward)

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Motion to approve the minutes** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Kelly Goward
  - Discussion: nothing to update
  - **Vote: All vote aye and motion passes.**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- **Motion to approve the agenda** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Kelly Goward
  - Discussion: nothing to update
  - **Vote: All vote aye and motion passes.**

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

QUESTIONS ON BOARD REPORTS - No questions on board reports.

Murielle Garbarinos- CISMA Coordinator – Report
Morgan Anderson- Produce Safety Technician - Report
Forest Pest Technicians - Report
Ben Jordan - 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
Annaleese Rasanen - Bookkeeper Report
MDARD - Report
NRCS -Report
MACD - Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT (See written report) - Questions and discussion about Chase Bank credit card issues.

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHT - Murielle Garbarino (WMCISMA Coordinator) provides a highlight on current projects and work completed over the summer through the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area program (WMCISMA).

FY27 Budget Hearing (Motion to open/close)

- **Financial:**
  - Public Comment for FY27 Budget
    - **Motion to open public comment on FY27 Budget** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Kelly Goward, **all voted Aye to open public comment.**
      - Discussion: no public comment
      - **Motion to close public comment on FY27 Budget** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Kelly Goward. **All voted Aye to close public comment.**
  - August bill payment: See financial packet for bills list (Vote)

- **Motion to approve paying the bills** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Tim VanDyke
    - Discussion: Just a question about personal reimbursements due to credit card issues. Some reimbursements were bigger than usual due to district card issues.
    - Vote: All vote aye in roll call vote and **motion passes to pay the bills.**

- August financials & bank reconciliations: See *the financial packet for our profit & loss, balance sheet, and checking account reconciliation*
    - Board members asked some clarifying questions about line items in our balance sheet and profit/loss statement.
- Cash flow forecast - Explanation (Ben & Annaleese)
    - Board and staff discuss how cash (reimbursements and payments) is flowing through the end of the quarter
- MACD Membership/Dues (Vote)
    - ED Ben shares information on the potential cost savings if we increase our macd dues for FY27 from basic ($650) to advanced ($1300). Overall raising our dues level would pay for itself in discounts.
    - The board discusses pros and cons of increasing dues for FY27.
    - Rivka discusses pros of also paying the additional $500 special allocation for advocacy to MACD on top of regular MACD dues.
    - **Motion to pay advanced membership dues in the amount of $1,300 plus the advocacy campaign (additional $500 per year for three years) total $1,800 first year.** - Kelly Goward, Supported by Becky Huttenga.
        - Discussion: no extra discussion.
        - Vote: Roll Call vote: Kelly Goward - Yes, Becky Huttenga - Yes, Rivka Hodgkinson - Recuse vote due to being MACD Executive Director, Doug Grotenrath - No , Tim VanDyke - No. **Motion does not pass due to a tie .**
    - **Motion to pay advanced membership dues in the amount of $1,300 (no advocacy campaign)** - Kelly Goward, Supported by Becky Huttenga.
        - Discussion: Board clarifies questions about the macd membership tiers.
        - Vote: Roll Call vote: Kelly Goward - Yes, Becky Huttenga - Yes, Rivka Hodgkinson - Recuse vote due to being MACD Executive Director, Doug Grotenrath - Yes, Tim VanDyke - No. **Motion passes to pay MACD membership due of $1,300.**
- FY27 Appropriations (Vote)
    - **Motion to approve the FY27 appropriations budget and authorize the Board Chair to sign the general appropriations act - Rivka Hodgkinson,** Supported by Kelly Goward.
        - Discussion: Board and Staff discuss questions and clarifications surrounding the FY27 appropriations budget and district operations budget, specifically about NACD dues within the operations budget part of the appropriations budget and general clarifications on budget numbers.
        - Vote: Roll Call Vote: All board members vote yes. **Motion passes to approve the FY27 appropriations budget and authorize the Board Chair to sign the general appropriations act.**

county staff person. Board is looking to authorize either the vice chair or treasurer to sign contract agreement.
    - Rivka motions to authorize kelly to sign the contract, kelly seconded.
    - Discussion: minor modifications were made, concerns by board members on the authority of a single board member to not act on something that was approved on by the board because they didn't want to.
    - Roll call vote: Rivka yes, Tim yes, Doug yes, Kelly yes, Becky yes.
  - CTAP cost share (discussion)
    - Provide extra cost share to two farmers because we have extra money in wages due to there being a few months with no CTAP staff person.
    - Board discusses that back in the day there used to be a board committee to approve farmer cost share. The grant currently does not require board approval for cost share. Becky suggested that we authorize ximena under ben and the grant to spend rest of remaining money on cost share.
    - Tim asked a question about what makes a farmer eligible for cost share, jack said mdard doesn't have any guidelines. 1000 state of michigan definition. Ben clarifies that this money usually goes to people who are trying to finish being maeap verified. And maeap cost share is usually small. Money not spent would go back into state freshwater fund and doesn't necessarily affect district grant allocations year to year. Tim had questions on eligibility of farms based on size or productivity or what they are producing. We have $7,000 to spend in the grant still. Ximena wanted to prioritize funding towards farmers and practices rather than just buying extra supplies or spill kits.
    - Becky wants to confirm the policy around board approving costshare because it's not necessary for the board to approve those because there is an internal ranking and grantors approve cost share amounts.
    - **Tim Vandyke motions to send the money back to MDARD, no support for motion so motion fails.**
    - All costshare practices to be funded are suggested by MDARD. And all costshares we provide through grants have to look through the lens of reducing nonpoint source pollutants and improving water quality.
- **Grants:** Doug asked questions about Tracey's employment based on grants (if we're getting NACD Technical Grant or not). Ben (ED) suggested that we discuss Tracey's position come January which is when we'll know if we've received either NACD or NFWF grants which would fully fund her position.
  - **Preparing:**
    - N/A
  - **Pending:**
    - 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.**

- Human Resource: **NOTE WIFI SIGNAL CUT OUT WHICH CAUSED RECORDING TO END DURING THIS SECTION**
    - Work Agreements (Vote)
        - ED shares update on annual staff reviews conducted over the last month. It's been a great year for OCD staff!
        - **Motion to approve all new Work Agreements (other than annaleese which will be voted on separately) as presented** - Rivka Hodgkinson, Supported by Kelly Goward.
            - Discussion: Board clarifies questions about work agreements. Doug asked questions about where money is coming from in grants to accommodate raises and if there were wage caps or not. Grants don't typically have wage caps but the amount is approved in grant budgets and are usually amendable. MDARD grants used to have stricter rules around wage caps which they no longer have as long as deliverables are being achieved.
            - Vote: All vote yes in roll call vote. **Motion passed to approve all new work agreements (except for Annaleese) as presented.**
                - Morgan Anderson (Produce Safety Tech)
                - Sarah Bowman (Watershed & Conservation Specialist)
                - Meghan Bannink (RCPP Project Manager)
                - Ximena Figueroa (CTAP Tech)
                - Tracey Weatherwax (Conservation Specialist)
        - Annaleese Rasanen (Financial Accounts & Office Administrator)
            - **Motion to approve new work agreement for Annaleese Rasanen as presented** - Rivka Hodgkinson, supported by Doug Grotenrath.
                - Discussion: Changing Annaleese from hourly to salaried and updating role responsibilities. Annaleese's position is partially paid through district operational funding and also a number of grants.
                - Vote: All vote aye in roll call vote. **Motion passed to approve new work agreement for Annaleese Rasanen as presented.**
    - ED Annual Review - Needs to be scheduled
        - November is when Ben took over as ED. Board chair asks to review 360 review examples from other Districts and Chair will work with Ben to schedule a review time. Missaukee cd has a great 360 review example, Jack Knorek (mdard) also shared an example. Board decides to loosely schedule ED review for November. Jack and Rivka will provide best practices to help with review. Board chair will coordinate scheduling.

- **Operations:**
    - Contract with Ottawa County (Vote)
        - A few minor clerical changes were made. Doug (vice chair) was approved to sign but did not sign the new edited version. Becky still wants to recuse herself as a

- NACD Technical Assistance Grant - Provides capacity for District employees to assist with NRCS EQIP and CSP contracts and educational farming events. **Requested $121,333.82 over 1 year.** (Decisions by Sept 30, 2026) *(a couple more weeks than this, so October a decision should be made).*
- NFWF Conservation Partners Grant - Provides capacity for Ottawa District employees to assist with NRCS contracts and educational farming events. Partnered with Muskegon CD to help them get funding for one technical assistance staff person. **Requested $525,722.80 over 3 years.**

- **Executing:**
  - MDARD CTAP - Three year grant for CTAP technician. Funding will include wages, mileage, training, admin/overhead and a portion of cost share for landowners. **$260,000 over 3 years.**
  - MDARD Outreach and Education - Annual grant to accompany FY27 and FY28 CTAP grants. **$10,616 annually for two years.**
  - MDARD Regen Ag Farmer Network Renewal (Fy27 & FY28) - Renewal of the FY26 grant that will provide cost share & workshop assistance for a farmer network of 5 growers for regenerative agricultural practices and education. **$100,000 over 2 years.**
  - EGLE Yellow Floating Heart Treatment - Subaward from EGLE to help treat Yellow Floating Heart at several locations. **$1977.23 for FY27.**
  - 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. (moved to executing on 9/8/26)**

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

Board updates: (2 minutes)
Goward - Rush Creek clean up this upcoming Saturday, partnership with Ottawa County Water Resources Commissioner and ODC Network.
VanDyke - Comments about animosity between board and staff.
Grotenrath - none
Huttenga - Becky states appreciation to Tim being on board.
Hodgkinson - Rivka states appreciation for staff. Rivka commits to donate $500 to the district annually to cover the three year macd advocacy campaign on behalf of Ottawa CD.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

ADJOURN – 9:10 PM
Next meeting: October 13, 2026 at 6:30pm