

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board

Tuesday, February 8th, 2022 at 6:00 pm

MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham, MI

The regular meeting of ACD was held on the above date. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 by Chairman Highlen. Board members present at roll call: John Highlen, Rowan Bunce, Diane Kay-Hougaboom, Mike Saberniak. Board members absent: Liz Wiener. Staff present: Teri Grout, Matt Watkeys, Christy Foye, Kelly Sippl, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso, Landen Tetil.

Guests: James DeDecker, Director @ UPREC

Public comment: None

Motion to accept agenda by Bunce; Kay-Hougaboom seconded; MCUC.

Motion to approve minutes of the January 2022 regular meeting: It was noted that the January 2022 minutes are dated as December 2021 and need to be fixed. Motion to approve the January 2022 regular meeting minutes as amended by Kay-Hougaboom; seconded by Saberniak; MCUC.

STAFF REPORTS: Written reports reviewed by board, highlighted by staff present.

- a. NRCS DC: Cady highlighted written report.
- b. NRCS SC: Sippl highlighted written report.
- c. FAP FORESTER: Kelso highlighted written report.
- d. ED: Grout highlighted written report.
- e. DM: Watkeys highlighted written report.
- f. CONSERVATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Foye highlighted written report.
- g. MDARD: Written report received.
- h. PRODUCE SAFETY: Tetil highlighted written report.
- i. MAEAP: No report received.

MEETING REPORTS: Grout attended UPRC&D meeting and noted that ACD should appoint someone else to attend these meetings moving forward.

- a. MOOSE LODGE/ANNUAL BANQUET: Watkeys reported that he attended last month's Moose meeting and the lodge looks like a good space to hold ACD's annual meeting. Capacity of the Moose Lodge is 150 and the district anticipates 50-80 attendees. Watkeys asked the board for a decision on whether to hold the Annual meeting in regard to covid – covid numbers are trending down at this time. The board unanimously said to go forward with having the meeting at the Moose Lodge. Board members and staff will divide and conquer the list of businesses to solicit silent auction donations from. Tickets will be \$13 in advance and \$15 at the door. Watkeys said tickets will be comped for board members, public officials and staff. Watkeys mentioned that Jim Isleib won't be in attendance this year so there will need to be someone else to count ballots. Cady volunteered. Watkeys will look into legality of NRCS employees counting ballots.

Old Business:

- a. INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM:
 - RC&D:* Watkeys discussed phragmites work with Nick Cassel from RC&D - ACD will be mowing phragmites biomass this winter and assisting with a "Life After Phragmites" mailing to all prior treatment landowners. Watkeys reported that RC&D has money for ACD to treat phrag this summer.
 - DISTRICT:* Watkeys reported that district funds are being used as match to finish up the HWA surveys.
- b. MISG/LAKE-TO-LAKE CISMA:
 - HWA:* Watkeys reported that surveys will be wrapping up as there are 5-man days remaining. Watkeys reported great feedback from landowners.
 - MISG 2019 Survey & Treatment:* Nothing to report.

MISG Knotweed: Watkeys, Grout and Foye had a strategy session and decided it would be best to pursue and extension through the end of 2023 – due to the amount of outreach and data organization for this project.

- c. SOGL 2019 – Watkeys reported that seasonal staff will continue road/stream-crossing monitoring and treatment, gravel pit treatment and flowering rush treatment this summer.
- d. NEW GRANTS & FUNDING UPDATE: Watkeys is waiting to hear on the MISGP core funding and the Au Train Lake CWD grants – awards should be announced in April. Tetil wrote and submitted an Urban Ag grant “Pairing Pollinators with Food Gardens in Marquette and Alger Counties” for partnering work for ACD and MCCD, as well as some funding for Agripalooza. Watkeys is looking into the UP Sustainable Forest and Wildlife Fund grant to build a shed, trails and birding blind on the district’s land in Chatham. Native plants have already been secured with grant funding for this site.
- e. DISTRICT EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS– Suggestion that the “Forestry for Michigan Birds” workshop scheduled for July 15th be a MAEAP phase 1 event.
- f. DISTRICT STRATEGY – COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE – Watkeys met with an Account Rep from TV 6 for advertising for the district. He asked the board for volunteers for a communications committee; Highlen and Bunce volunteered. He also asked for volunteers for a personnel committee; Kay-Hougaboom volunteered. Wiener or Highlen will fill in the other position.

New Business:

- a. APPROVE NRCS CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM CONTRACTS – Sippl passed around 2 CSP renewal contracts for the board to look over and sign.
- b. PERSONNEL POLICY REVIEW – Watkeys mentioned that Foye has been a district employee for 3 years now which qualifies her to go from the current 4 hours to 6 hours vacation time earned for every 80 hours worked. Bunce made a motion to increase Foye’s vacation time earned to the proposed 6 hours per 80 hours worked; Kay-Hougaboom seconded; MCUC. Watkeys presented a vehicle use policy to the board to go over. There was a discussion on the “Damages and Accidents” portion of the policy (8.8) with questions arising regarding what constitutes damage and the legality of whether the district employee should be responsible for paying for damages. Other suggestions were also made: a copy of employee drivers license should be part of their personnel file, policy should state that current insurance and registration will be kept in the vehicle and that the driver will follow state driving laws, and lastly that a police report will be filed for any property damage accidents. Watkeys will fix the proposed changes.
- c. VACATION AND COMP TIME, WORK AGREEMENT CHANGES continued – The board revisited the conversation from last month’s meeting regarding employee sick time and vacation time accrual. Watkeys suggested that employee sick time should no longer be accrued, but a yearly stipend of 104 hours, which is standard for other districts. A motion was made by Hougaboom to approve a new employee sick time policy of 104 sick hours per year, that resets each year. Bunce seconded; MCUC. Watkeys then suggested an 80-hour max rollover of accrued vacation (annual) time per year with a max cap of 240 hours at any given time. A motion was made by Highlen to approve this new vacation accrual and cap policy; Hougaboom seconded; MCUC.
- d. ACD GRANTS SPREADSHEET AND UPDATE: Watkeys presented a spreadsheet with all current grants, current budgets, start/end dates and deliverables to the board. Watkeys will meet with L2L CISMA coordinator regarding phragmites treatments in Alger County. He also reported that USFS will provide match for the flowering rush treatment on the Au Train River. He is still waiting to hear about “Clean Boats, Clean Waters” grant awards and Seney Wildlife Refuge would like to contract ACD for \$2500 for invasive species treatment at the refuge. Watkeys officially withdrew the scrap tire grant that he and Grout submitted due to logistical difficulties.
- e. MICORPS STREAM MONITORING FOR SUMMER 2022: Grout will apply for a Mi Corps maintenance grant for \$2000 to get the district updated materials for stream monitoring. She will also organize stream monitoring volunteer days.

ACCEPT TREASURERS REPORT/PAY BILLS: Watkeys highlighted the report and mentioned that the first millage payment came in January and an MDARD operations grant payment also came in January. Motion to accept Treasurers Report and pay bills made by Kay-Hougaboom; seconded by Bunce; MCUC.

CORRESPONDENCE: Watkeys passed around correspondence.

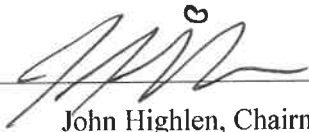
PUBLIC COMMENT: DeDecker commented and said that while he unfortunately can't make it to the annual meeting in March, he enjoyed being here and meeting the board and staff, and hopes he is elected to serve on the board of directors.

Motion made by Bunce; seconded by Saberniak to adjourn at 7:44pm; MCUC.

Submitted by Matt Watkeys, District Manager

These Minutes are subject to approval until signed below.

APPROVED: _____



John Highlen, Chairman

OR

Rowan Bunce, Secretary

Date: 3/8/22