

## Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Alger Conservation District (ACD) Board

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 5:00 pm

MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham, MI

A regular meeting of ACD was held on the above date. The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm by Chairman John Highlen. Board members present at roll call: Rowan Bunce, Hilary Ludecke, and Hans Eriksen. Board members absent: James Dedecker. Associate board members Charlie Todd (present) and Barb Isom (present). Staff present: Matt Watkeys, Alex Kolton, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso, and Rachael Guth. Staff absent: Elise Desjarlais, Landen Tetil, Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Guests: None

Public comment: None

Correspondence: Watkeys passed around correspondence.

Approve agenda: Motion to approve the agenda as presented by Bunce, seconded by Erickson; All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to approve minutes of the October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, regular meeting by Ludecke, seconded by Erickson; All in favor, motion carried.

STAFF REPORTS: Written reports reviewed by the board and highlighted by staff.

- a. NRCS DC: Report received. Cady expressed the requirement to deploy EOY payments before November 3<sup>rd</sup> causes reporting “quick flip” as EOY reporting, and payments deadlines coincide. Cady confirmed reports and payments met the scheduled deadline.
- b. NRCS SC: No report received. No comment made.
- c. FAP FORESTER: Report received. Kelso expressed thanks to Cady, Highlen, and Dedecker for attending her annual forest advisory meeting on Oct 19<sup>th</sup>, reported success. Additionally discussed was the forest forensic hike which reported great attendance and participation of a dozen residents.
- d. PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received. No comment made.
- e. L2L CISMA: Report received. No comment made.
- f. DM: Report received. Watkeys clarified CD Ad was in the Munising Beacon, shared the Ad size and cost. CD made a donation in partnership with DNR to the robotics class at Superior Central to show appreciation for the class’ help on the Au Train Fish Habitat project this past year. Watkeys requested clarification from Guth regarding min/max funding amount for National Wild Turkey Fed Grant, Guth requested Watkeys reach out to Ryan directly for verification.
- g. CONSERVATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Report received. Kolton reported USFS grant applied for in October should be reviewed for final approval status by committee before the end of November.
- h. MDARD: Report received. Guth verified approval of state retention policy, and stated rollout of the policy is TBD. A webinar will be hosted by MDARD on November 28<sup>th</sup> for CD managers. Guth continued and reminded the board and staff of meeting minutes policy and procedure. Alger CD is compliant with standards and will continue to uphold these standards. As a published reminder, board meetings are open to the public, and minutes for the meetings are available at the District Office within 8 days of the scheduled meeting.
- i. MAEAP: Report received. No comment made.

MEETING REPORTS: Watkeys reported the land acquisition for the CD managed land project in Munising is now “under contract” with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and city of Munising. The grant application is being written by MN non-profit (TPL) who specializes in land acquisition and has a history of working with CDs. This MN partner is working alongside the landowner and the city to facilitate a grant that will allow an acquisition. Matt further states he will touch base with the city planner in Dec for up-to-date information.

### Old Business:

- a. OTHER GRANTS & FUNDING UPDATE:

- MISG JAPANESE KNOTWEED: Watkeys reported that fall monitoring and reporting is complete. Budget is over \$500, and a landowner handout/guide still needed to be produced and printed per the grant deliverables. This deficit is anticipated due to the grant extension, and staffing required.
- MISG HIMALAYAN BALSAM: Watkeys reported no changes, no new reports.
- MISG SURVEY&TREATMENT: Watkeys reported that survey and treatment of spotted knapweed is now closed for the season.
- AUTRAIN FISH HABITAT: Watkeys reported that there are additional landowners interested in becoming involved with the project.
- GLRI PROPOSAL: Proposal was finalized and submitted prior to deadline. ACD is awaiting review committee approval.
- NEXT YEAR MISG S&T: Applied for subaward with Marquette CD, similar to 2023.
- AMERICORP UPDATE: Watkeys explained AmeriCorps member resignation was accepted, no complications to report. Erickson expressed a thanks for the program and interest to reapproach the program again the spring and consider a six month AmeriCorps term over a full year term for the next AmeriCorps team member.

### **New Business:**

- a. MDARD: Guth advised all conservation districts to review operations manuals as a “best practice”. No additional news or items to report on currently. Reiterated the retention policy is currently at the Lansing office level, and we are awaiting final direction.
- b. WEBSITE AND ONLINE RETAIL HOST CHANGE TO GODADDY: Watkeys opened the conservation stating ACD was currently using three online products to operate the district and has now surpassed the capacity of all three programs, we have an opportunity to switch our services and combine them to one unified platform. Watkeys then passed the conversation to Kolton, Kolton summarized the current tools, how the district has outgrown their given capacity, and then stated moving the systems with GoDaddy would increase the district tool functions, reduce operational cost, and increase capacity. Kolton recommended at least a two, or three, year contract to the new provider, siting significant cost reduction. Additionally, GoDaddy has the capacity and capability to offer a “fully hosted platform” for ACD when ACD outgrows these next programs. Highlen asked if this switch would interfere with day-to-day operations, Watkeys and Kolton confirmed the switch would be seamless and have no impact on day-to-day operations. The board agreed with the direction, Watkeys confirmed this operational shift was planned in the appropriated budget and no vote was taken, or needed. The board supports the website, mailing, and online store migration.

ACCEPT TREASURY REPORT/PAY BILLS: Watkeys presented financial reports for the month and year-to-date. He noted the accountant stated ACD should be showing financials’ Profit-Loss vs. Budget by class. Watkeys confirmed with the board how they would like to see financial statements. Bunce, Highlen, and Erikson agree to review class reports as needed, no change to financial statements required at this time. The Board further clarified the success of Watkeys and his ability to create a favorable financial outcome for the district.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No Comment

STAFF DISMISSED FOR WORK AGREEMENTS; PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND DISTRICT MANAGER: Board discussed and made amendments to both work agreements. Motion to approve Work Agreements with amendments by Bunce, seconded by Eriksen; All in favor, motion carried.

Motion made by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to adjourn at 6:31pm; All in favor, motion carried.

*Submitted by James DeDecker, Secretary*

*These Minutes are subject to approval until signed below.*

APPROVED: 

John Highlen, Chairman

OR

James Dedecker, Secretary

Date: 12/13/23