

MINUTES

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, October 8th, 2024, 5:00 pm * MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

Call to order:

A regular meeting of ACD was held on the above date. The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm by Chair John Highlen.

Board members present:

Staff present:

Board members present at roll call: John Highlen, Rowan Bunce, James DeDecker, Hilary Ludecke and Hans Eriksen. Board members absent: None. Associate board members present: Barb Isom and Charlie Todd. Staff present: Alex Kolton, Eryn Grupido and Elise Desjarlais. Staff absent: Sara Kelso, Misa Cady, Helena Moleski, Amy Frye, Landen Tetil and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Board members absent:

Staff absent:

Guests: None

Public comment: Bunce shared that the Rock River Township Planning Commission recently adopted a new Master Plan, which will now go to the township board for approval. The plan includes conservation goals and policies relevant to the work of ACD.

Highlen thanked Bunce for chairing recent board meetings in his absence.

Correspondence: Kolton passed around correspondence received since the last regular meeting.

Approve agenda:

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

Approve minutes of September 10th, 2024 Regular Meeting:

Bunce asked to change the header title from "Agenda" to "Minutes".

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to approve the minutes as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

Board and Staff Reports: review written reports:

Written reports were reviewed by the board and highlighted by staff.

- a. **NRCS DC: No report received.**
- b. **NRCS SC: No report received.**
- c. **FAP FORESTER: Report received.**
- d. **PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.**
- e. **L2L CISMA: Report received.**
Desjarlais reported that the CISMA field season is wrapping-up, aside from planned surveys for hemlock wooly adelgid. The CISMA is working on a \$100K GLRI proposal focused on management of invasive species on motorized trail networks.
- f. **ACD DM: Report received.**
Kolton reported that the DNR Trust Fund proposal for Munising Bay Overlook was finalized and submitted with partner input.
- g. **ACD DC: Report received.**
Grupido reported that Agripalooza was a great success!
- h. **MDARD: Report received.**
- i. **MAEAP: Report received.**

Meeting Reports: None

Old Business:

- a. **Review, Draft Committee Policy – ACD Strategic Planning Committee**
Kolton proposed that ACD form subcommittees with formal charges and regular meeting schedules to handle business outside of regular meetings. He shared a draft Strategic Planning Committee policy outline for committee structure and responsibilities.
- b. **Discussion, Board Sub-Committees:**
The board discussed how stakeholders could be involved in subcommittees, and Kolton suggested a focus group format to limit the timeline and scope of public involvement. Committee structure, meeting frequency, etc. could likely vary based on need. Eriksen suggested prioritizing what issues or committees take precedence. DeDecker and Highlen expressed concern that subcommittees may lack critical mass or demand too much additional time from board members. Kolton suggested prioritizing strategic planning in the context of our business plan and future millage campaign, and Highlen noted that diversifying ACD income would be a reasonable second priority for subcommittees.
 - 1. Strategic Planning
 - 2. District Policy
 - 3. Tree Sale & Outreach
 - 4. Diversifying Income & Investments
- c. **Review Amended Contract from NRConnections**
Kolton presented an amended contract with NRConnections, reflecting recent board input. The contract dates were updated to match the ACD fiscal year. The total cost commitment was reduced to \$6k, and a weekly limit of 10 hours worked without board pre-approval and a shared timesheet was added. DeDecker suggested that identifying a specific resource concern, project or funding opportunity to engage NRConnections in might improve our return on investment. Kolton shared that the investment of \$6k is only a small portion of our budget with great potential for returns in the form of grant funding. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to approve the contract with NRConnections as amended. All in favor; motion carries.
- d. **2024 regulatory audit update**
Kolton reported that all paperwork has been submitted to SOME CPA to conduct a targeted/random audit (vs. an exhaustive audit).

New Business

- a. **Stream Sampling/Monitoring**
DeDecker reviewed ACD's stream sampling work on the Slap Neck and Bohemian Creeks above and below UPREC over the last two years and suggested a plan for leveraging the data for future collaborative grant proposals in partnership with NMU, etc. The board was supportive of sharing the data and pursuing this concept.
- b. **Farm support for succession or transition, MiFarmLink.Org**
DeDecker shared information on a young organization based in the Washtenaw Co. CD, MiFarmLink, which seeks to assist existing farmers and landowners with identifying a successor and vice-versa. DeDecker is serving on the advisory council for MiFarmLink.

c. **Update FY24/25, CISMA S&T Sub-award**

Desjarlais reported that the MISG RFA is open. ACD has historically received subawards from CISA for survey and treatment of invasive species. The funder recently shared that S&T subawards are unlikely this cycle due to long-term project sustainability concerns and the need to encourage partner buy-in or self-sufficiency. What was historically an \$8-15K subaward to ACD will be closer to \$5K this year from other sources after 10 years of partnership under MISG.

d. **Staffing Levels, a recommendation to hire**

Kolton has been reviewing the budget and work plan, and proposed hiring an additional staff member. He suggested hiring Olivia Englehardt who interviewed for the District Manager position and shared a draft work agreement. Eriksen suggested implementing an employee background check policy, which Kolton noted would require a formal policy change. DeDecker asked if the new hire would supplant the need for additional seasonal help, and Kolton stated that Olivia would start part-time, but increase to full time next spring/field season. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Bunce, to approve the work agreement for Olivia Englehardt as presented. All in favor; motion carried. Kolton will contact Enhlehardt to gauge her interest and answer questions.

e. **Budget Amendment(s): Staffing, S&T Sub-award**

Kolton presented an amended budget to reflect reduction of the subaward from L2L CISMA under MISG to \$5K, as well as costs associated with the recently approved work agreement and timeline for a new DC hire. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Eriksen to approve the budget as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

f. **Board Elections: Hans and Rowan's terms end in March 2025**

Bunce and Eriksen expressed interest in re-election for a new term on the board in their same roles.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills

Kolton presented ACD financial statements as of September 30th, 2024. Some line items are over budget for staff, insurance, and unemployment expenses, partially related to staff turnover/overlap and increased insurance rates. Kolton noted that net revenue to-date is less than budgeted, but still healthy. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Eriksen, to accept the Treasury Reports and pay the bills. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

Highlen asked about a pending request for e-signature to accept MDARD operating funds.

Adjourn

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to adjourn at 6:49 pm. All in favor; motion carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: November 12th, 2024, 5:00 pm

APPROVED: _____



DATE: 11/12/24

John Highlen, Chairman **OR** Rowan Bunce, Vice President