

Alger CD Board of Director Minutes
For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, February 11th, 2025, 5:00 pm * MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

Call to order: On the above date, Chairperson John Highlen called the ACD's regular meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Board members present: James DeDecker, John Highlen, Rowan Bunce, Hans Eriksen

Board members absent: Hilary Ludecke

Associate board members present: Barb Isom and Charlie Todd

Associate board members absent: None

Staff present: Alex Kolton, Eryn Grupido, Sara Kelso, Misa Cady.

Staff absent: Olivia Engelhardt, Elise Desjarlais, Amy Frye, Landen Tetil, Kyler Hanson, and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Guests: None

Public comment: Bunce announced the UP200 is seeking volunteers for Saturday morning still and provided a phone number for a volunteer coordinator for any interested.

Approve agenda:

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

Approve minutes of January 14th, 2025, Regular Meeting:

Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker to approve previous minutes. 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 SC: Report received.** Cady highlighted the Farm Bill of 2018 has been extended for another year and will not be up for renewal again until September 30, 2025 and went over the timeline provided for program deadlines. Cady estimated each EQIP application takes 20-40 hours to complete but that they are working through them and clarified the organic produce program available to DeDecker and requirements that limit its growth in the area currently. A final update of all projects related to the Inflation Reduction Act are on hold with the federal funding freeze, this includes a halt to any reimbursements being released until the freeze is lifted.
- b. **FAP FORESTER: Report received.** Kelso announced that the Women's Snowshoe event last week was a hit and there will be another in Marquette County. Landowners are still requesting site visits and event season is going well - no additional help needed at this moment.
- d. **PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.**
- e. **L2L CISMA: Report received.**
- f. **ACD DD: Report received.**
- g. **ACD DC: Report received.**
- h. **MDARD: Report received.**
- i. **MAEAP: Report received.**

Meeting Reports: Kolton provided an update on how the Upper Peninsula Manager's Retreat went. It was noted that the region is open to collaborating and that the event provided a much needed space to begin doing so.

Old Business:

a. Policy Review: Substance Abuse

Kolton presented the Substance Abuse Policy updated to include last meetings revisions. Recommended to remove the wording "occurring in the workplace". Discussion established that the board will research where staff can receive testing if necessary and create a procedure to follow through with policy requirements.

Motion to approve the Substance Abuse Policy with recommended amendment by DeDecker, Seconded by Eriksen. All in favor/motion carried.

b. Operational Updates: Tree Sale, CNA, and Tech Migration

Kolton reported that the Tree Sale launch has gone well and currently sales are at 25% of the total revenue goal for the year. The mailer catalog has run into delivery delays as the printer outsourced our order to a Canadian company. Currently, they are printed and being held at the border until there is a procedure established to process import tariffs. District staff plan to print catalog versions in office to distribute to local businesses in the meantime. The original expected date of arrival was the 15th, discussion continued of whether to cancel if not received by then and seek an alternative printer; an alternative printer was identified if so. Tech migration is almost complete. The District was denied a leasing option and has pursued purchasing new computers. In light of staff reduction, only two will be updated, with a third to be done so only after another full time staff is contracted.

c. Annual Meeting Date/Board Elections

The venue and catering for the annual meeting have been established. Kolton proposed changing the format of the meeting to include multiple presenters invited through our partners to share the work we've done together this year and to move the board meeting to its own date instead of within the annual meeting. The board agreed to move the regular meeting to Tuesday, March 4th, at 5pm in the MSU Extension Farm Conference Room.

Motioned by Bunce, Seconded by DeDecker to adjust regular meeting date as discussed. All in favor; motion carried.

New Business

a. Approve MERS contribution change: District Coordinator

Proof of contribution approval by the board is required to complete the contracted MERS contribution for District Coordinator.

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Eriksen to approve contributions as presented. All in favor; motion carried.

b. PIRO HWA Surveys/Training: Funding on hold

PIRO has informed the District that funding for HWA surveys are currently frozen as part of their GLRI award. The District requests to pursue training with the DNR at the Sleeping Bear event and funds to be approved to cover the cost of overnight travel for two staff members in order to pursue surveying independently of PIRO in the future.

Motion by Eriksen, seconded by DeDecker to approve training and travel funds for HWA Surveying.

c. **Policy Review: Sick Leave Act Policy Adaptation**

Kolton presented the Sick Leave Policy with updates to stay in line with the requirements of the Michigan Earned Sick Time Act, effective February 21st, 2025. Recommendations were given to bullet point the hours available to staff by staff classification for clarity, define the total amount possible to be accrued as full-time staff as 174 hours a year, and update temporary staff to an accrual basis with the additional 32 hours approved case by case as needed.

Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Bunce to approve the Sick Leave Policy as amended and review further recommendations next month.

d. **Update on OE Employment**

District Coordinator Enghardt has provided a letter of resignation for the board and thanks us for their time as a staff member. Discussion of whether to hire new staff will be determined after a review of the budget.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills

Kolton presented ACD financial statements as of February 11th, 2025. The board reviewed the report.

Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Eriksen, to accept the Treasury Reports and pay the bills as presented. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

DeDecker shared that the MSU Extension has welcomed a Fulbright Postdoctoral from Pakistan to join the hemp research team and that they and their family are currently getting acquainted with the area. They are available to give presentations about their research and the agricultural practices of Pakistan if there is any interest. Highlen announced multiple events to be held by Trout Unlimited in the coming months, he will share the flier of events with all but they are as follows: February 19th Barrel & Beam in Marquette will host a discussion night on research on the area, March 24th is the annual fly tying event at Ore Dock Brewing, April 5th there will be a fly fishing film festival at the NMU Ballroom. DeDecker mentioned that the Deer Management Initiative does have a contact with the DNR to discuss any questions we have relating to deer habitat management.

Adjourn

Motion by Eriksen, seconded by Dedecker, to adjourn at 6:34 pm. All in favor; motion carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: March 4th, 2025, 5:00 pm

Grupido has transcribed these minutes.

Submitted by James DeDecker | Minutes are subject to approval until signed below

APPROVED:  DATE: 4/8/25

John Highlen, Chairperson OR Rowan Bunce, Vice Chair