

## MINUTES

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board  
Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 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 and Hilary Ludecke. Board members absent: Hans Eriksen. Associate board members present: Barb Isom and Charlie Todd. Staff present: Alex Kolton, Sara Kelso, Misa Cady, Landen Tetil and Elise Desjarlais. Staff absent: Eryn Grupido and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

### Board members absent:

#### Staff absent:

**Guests:** None

**Public comment:** Michael Paling, forester with American Bird Conservancy, discussed the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Forestry for Birds educational program. RCPP provides cost share for young forest habitat in the Upper Midwest to protect two species of warblers. Paling asked ACD to help promote the program, as current funding is ending and renewal has been delayed. Alger Co has seen relatively few projects under these programs, but is also more recently eligible.

**Correspondence:** Kolton passed around correspondence received since the last regular meeting, including the NACD annual report, an erroneous MI use tax withholding bill, a balance credit for MI unemployment and a notice about Advisor advertising rates increasing by 30%.

### Approve agenda:

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

### Approve minutes of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Meeting:

Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Bunce to approve the 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 DC: Report received.

Cady reported receiving calls on new high tunnel applications and forest management plans. She is processing seven new EQIP applications. However, only 50% of recent EQIP and CSP applications were funded due to loss of IRA funding.

#### b. NRCS SC: Report received.

#### c. FAP FORESTER: Report received.

Kelso reported that site visits have been busy with 5 scheduled in Alger Co next week. She took an enjoyable vacation out west.

#### d. PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.

Tetil reported that there is a new Subpart E of the FSMA Ag Water (preharvest) rule being rolled out, which removed specific requirements for water testing, but added requirements for completion of a Ag Water Assessment tool.

#### e. L2L CISMA: Report received.

Desjarlais reported that the CISMA is in a holding pattern waiting on delayed federal funding through Forest Service contracts and GLRI to be released. They have been moving staff time and hours around to remain operable in the meantime, while the field season is in full swing.

- f. **ACD DM: Report received.**
- g. **ACD DC: Report received.**
- h. **MDARD: Report received.**
- i. **MAEAP: Report received.**

**Meeting Reports:** Kolton reported attending more Alger Co township meetings to increase ACD visibility and networking. DeDecker reported being invited to give a keynote presentation at the Dickenson Co. CD annual meeting on Aug 21 about UPREC and MiFarmlink.

#### **Old Business:**

- a. **Additional Insurance:**  
Kolton presented a three tiered proposal for a supplemental accident insurance policy from Fischer. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to accept the highest tier of coverage at a cost of \$425 annually.
- b. **Board Letter to Support Partner Programs:**  
Kolton presented a draft partner support letter for the ACD Board to use targeting legislators and other decision makers highlighting the importance of state and federal funding for partner operations and local impact.
- c. **Sign Licensing Request Letter:**  
Kolton presented a no-cost licensing agreement with Dr. Seuss Enterprises for ACD use of branded signage, educational materials, etc. Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker to sign the licensing agreement. All in favor; motion carried.
- d. **Legal Advisor:**  
Diane Kay-Hougaboom, local attorney and former ACD board member, submitted a proposal letter to the board offering ad-hoc legal services at a reduced rate of \$150/hr. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to accept the proposed legal services with no retainer and monthly billing, as needed. All in favor; motion carried.
- e. **Draft Budget Review FY26:**  
Kolton presented a draft budget for FY26 in an updated format to better represent grants and special projects vs regular operations and overall cash flow. Line items for an accountant and legal advisor have been merged to facilitate migrating from Quick Books desktop to online. A line for Tools and Safety has been added.
- f. **Director Highlen Resignation:**  
Highlen presented his official letter of resignation to the Board, citing the secure state of ACD staff and operations, as well as competing demands for his time. The Board thanked Highlen for his leadership and service.

#### **New Business**

- a. **Confirmation of Director Roles:**  
The Board discussed rearranging leadership roles in light of Highlen's resignation. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Ludecke for Bunce as Chair, Ludecke as Vice Chair, Todd as Treasurer, DeDecker as Secretary and Eriksen as member. All in favor; motion carried. Kolton will share a Board roles and responsibilities document.
- b. **Remove and Add Bank Signatories:**  
Motion to remove Highlen and add Todd as ACD bank signatories. All in favor; motion carried.
- c. **Review Applicants:**  
Kolton presented, and the Board discussed, application materials from six candidates for Jr. District Coordinator. By consensus, the Board agreed to interview four applicants including Gallagher, Robertson, Moleski and Wheeler.
- d. **Applicant Review Subcommittee:**

Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Todd to form an Applicant Review subcommittee to include Bunce as Chair, Ludecke and Kolton. All in favor; motion carried.

e. **Review FOIA Policy:**

Kolton presented an amended FOIA policy in light of recent FOIA requests from Open the Books MI requesting staff lists, financial statements and transaction records. Kolton is responding to the FOIA requests with the information requested and waiving fees. After discussion, the Board agreed the no changes to the FOIA policy are required.

**Accept Treasury Report; pay bills**

Kolton presented ACD financial statements as of July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Changes are expected to the salary and IT lines to reflect the new Jr. DC position. Kolton reported a continued positive trend in our operations - we are currently at 90% of our projected revenues with a nominal trending deficit of \$5,500 (we will sit net positive in FY25). Last year, on this date, we were trending a \$28,000 revenue deficit, despite having an identical budget. Motion by Todd, seconded by DeDecker, to accept the Treasury Reports and pay the bills. All in favor; motion carried.

**Public comment**

Kolton reported that ACD has received 216 responses to our need assessment survey, with the rate of new responses slowing recently. Kolton also suggested that the Board consider updating our ACD slogan of "Helping you manage your natural resources". DeDecker asked about the pending grant proposal to further develop the ACD-UPREC birding rail.

**Adjourn**

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to adjourn at 6:28 pm. All in favor; motion carried.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING: August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 5:00 pm**

AK

Board Chair

08/12/2025