

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

Tuesday, September 12, 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 VP Rowan Bunce. Board members present at roll call: Rowan Bunce, James DeDecker. Hilary Ludecke and Hans Eriksen. Board members absent: John Highlen. Associate board members Charlie Todd (present) and Barb Isom (absent). Staff present: Matt Watkeys, Christy Foye, Alex Kolton, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso, Kelly Sippl, Elise Desjarlais. Staff absent: Landen Tetil, Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Guests: None

Public comment: Watkeys acknowledged Kelly Sippl's service to ACD, Alger Co. and its citizens as she moves into a new GIS-focused position with the US Forest Service in Wisconsin. The ACD Board and staff thanked Sippl and congratulated her on her new position.

Correspondence: Watkeys passed around correspondence.

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

Motion to approve minutes of the August 8th, 2023, regular meeting by Ludecke, seconded by DeDecker; All in favor, motion carried.

BUDGET HEARING, FY2024 budget and Appropriations Act:

A budget hearing to review ACD's draft FY24 budget was opened at 5:04pm by VP Bunce. Watkeys presented a draft FY24 budget incorporating changes suggested since the August regular meeting. The budget includes prospective grant revenue and expenses based on a reasonable likelihood of receiving said grants. DeDecker asked, and Watkeys confirmed, that the budget accounts for increasing insurance costs. DeDecker noted how healthy the budget appears to be regardless of grant funding outcomes in the year ahead.

Public Comment: None

Board Action to adopt proposed Budget and Appropriations Act: Moved by DeDecker

Seconded by Ludecke

Roll Call: Highlen absent

Bunce Aye

Ludecke Aye

DeDecker Aye

Eriksen Aye

All in favor, motion carried.

Hearing Closed: 5:14pm

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

- a. NRCS DC: Report received. Cady noted the loss of Sippl to her new position in WI and thanked Kelly for her service to ACD and Alger Co. Cady also shared that the recent FAP Camp event was challenging due to one participant, Greg Corace of Alpena CD, acting inappropriately toward a landowner/host. Letters describing the incident were sent to MDARD leadership by Cady and Kelso. Guth noted that such feedback should be directed to Alpena CD, as they are Greg's official employer. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to direct Cady and Kelso to forward copies of their respective letters regarding the incident to Alpena CD leadership; Roll call, all in favor, motion carried.
- b. NRCS SC: No report received. Sippl reported that she was busy with site visits in August. She anticipates 20+ new applications for EQIP and CSP funding in FY24. Sippl also reported that her supervisor at NRCS plans to post a position for her replacement.
- c. FAP FORESTER: Report received. Kelso reported holding a productive meeting with a Chatham landowner referred from ACD outreach at the farmers market.
- d. PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.

- e. L2L CISMA: Report received. Desjarlais expressed thanks for ACD collaboration over the last year. She noted plans to submit six new grant proposals over eight weeks this fall. The proposed work will include projects focused on baby's breath, spotted knapweed, hemlock woolly adelgid, ORV vectors for high priority invasive species, frogbit surveys and core operations. Desjarlais also noted that the DNR Fish Habitat grant RFA includes references to ACD's recent Au Train Lake fish habitat project as an exemplary past project.
- f. DM: Report received. Watkeys noted recent truck repairs for an electrical recall, tire patch and oil change, all of which were paid for by the dealer. To date, 5,500 miles have been put on the ACD truck with another 2,000 miles anticipated this year.
- g. CONSERVATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Report received. Foye reported meeting with five cabin owners on Au Train Lake, fielding some critical feedback about woody debris in the lake, but ultimately resulting in very positive interactions and outcomes, including additional interest and support for the project, and a cash donation to ACD.
- h. ACD AmeriCorps VISTA: Report received.
- i. MDARD: Report received. Guth shared that new proposed MOAs between CDs, NRCS and MDARD are coming soon for review. This effort is being led by NRCS to replace current Cooperative Agreements dating from 1996-98. There will be a 30-day comment period after the draft MOA is released for feedback from CDs to MACD. Watkeys asked Guth about ACDs document retention schedule, and Guth shared that new guidance will roll-out near the end of FY23 with training available. Watkeys asked about insurance options available to ACD employees, and Guth shared that ACD has until October 15 to express interest in group insurance to Conservation District Employees of MI, which will be compiled with input from other CDs to determine group plans, pricing, etc.
- j. MAEAP: No report received.

MEETING REPORTS: Watkeys reported that an event held to celebrate progress with the Au Train Lake fish habitat project was successful with over 20 participants, including new interested landowners/stakeholders.

Old Business:

- a. OTHER GRANTS & FUNDING UPDATE:
 - DHIPI: Watkeys reported that he is drafting the final project report. One site remains to be under-planted. Otherwise, the project is on budget as we approach close-out.
 - MISG JAPANESE KNOTWEED: Watkeys reported that fall monitoring and reporting need to be done, but the project is nearly complete.
 - MISG HIMALAYAN BALSAM: Watkeys reported that the HB project location has been treated twice this year. So far, this remains the only site for HB identified in the UP.
 - MISG SURVEY&TREATMENT: Watkeys reported that survey and treatment of spotted knapweed in Grand Marais continues.
 - CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS, CHATHAM COMMUNITY GARDEN: Watkeys reported that a second outreach event for this project was held the week prior. The event was a success and the project is ready to close-out. Watkeys also shared that there is a marine clean-up event planned for Sept 13 at the Munising Municipal Pier with partners providing access to a boat and divers for waste retrieval.
 - SCRAP TIRE: Watkeys reminded the Board that scrap tire collection will occur in Onota Township September 15-16. He also shared plans to submit a new scrap tire proposal seeking approximately half of the funding amount requested in FY23.
 - CHATHAM COMMUNITY GARDEN: See public comment below.
 - AUTRAIN FISH HABITAT: Watkeys reported that there are additional landowners interested in becoming involved with the project. He plans to scout new locations for fish habitat installations this winter, with installation planned for next spring after the ice melts.
 - Eriksen noted that Grand Island Township Quarry Park looks great after ACD was contracted to do invasive species removal and conservation planting.
- b. AGRIPALOOZA DISCUSSION: Foye reported waiting on RSVPs from local schools. So far, she anticipates 28 total educational stations featuring 45 total presenters. Donations have been received from Peoples State Bank, Tadych's Marketplace (Econofoods), Belsolda Farm and Huron Mountain Bakery. All Alger Co. schools, except Munising Baptist, are planning to attend. We are expecting around 250 students total. Foye stated that she will invite media to the event. DeDecker reported that MSU AgBioResearch Associate Director, Dr. James Averill, will be attending to view the event and meet with staff beginning around 1pm.

New Business:

- a. ACD FOIA POLICY REVIEW: Watkeys and Kolton presented a revised FOIA policy for Board review based on input since the last meeting and a subsequent survey of FOIA policies from other CDs. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen to adopt the FOIA policy as presented; All in favor, motion carried.
- b. MACD 2024 DUES: The Board discussed potential benefits of the different MACD membership levels available to ACD. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Ludecke to allocate \$1,000 for a Gold level MACD membership and \$100 for the MACD advocacy fund; All in favor, motion carried.
- c. MACD FALL CONVENTION: Watkeys reported that he is not planning to attend the MACD fall meeting this year, but will wait to see the agenda before making a final decision. Guth reported that the event agenda will be available in Oct, and all Board members are welcome to attend.
- d. MUNISING BEACON WEEKLY ADS (\$65 PER WEEK FOR PRINT VERSION AD SPACE): Watkeys reported that ACD has been publishing budget meeting notices in the Beacon, and proposed that ACD purchase dedicated ad space on a monthly basis. Eriksen suggested op-ed articles that could share more detailed info with readers. DeDecker suggested developing a comprehensive advertising plan considering multiple potential outlets and formats. Eriksen and Watkeys agreed to ask the Beacon's editor about their current distribution numbers and need for a long-term commitment from ACD vs. working month-to-month. This item was tabled pending further information.
- e. MACD REGION 2 MEETING for 2024: Watkeys shared that ACD has been asked to host the MACD Region 2 meeting in 2024. He suggested the UPREC North Farm "Grange" building as a possible location to host the meeting, and DeDecker agreed. The event would be a full day in Aug 2024, likely incorporating tours of UPREC and/or ACD projects in Chatham and Au Train.
- f. ACD FY24 ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN: Watkeys presented an updated draft ACD Business Plan based on info from our most recent public survey and Strategic Plan. The Board discussed and consulted staff on goals and targets outlined in the document. Staff present agreed that the goals as outlined are appropriate. The Board discussed restarting the need assessment process with a new public needs assessment survey in 2026. Bunce suggested including it with mailing of Alger Co. tax bills to reach the greatest number of landowners possible, including absentees. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by DeDecker, to adopt the ACD Business Plan as presented; All in favor, motion carried.

ACCEPT TREASURY REPORT/PAY BILLS: Watkeys presented financial reports for the month and year-to-date. He noted recent delivery of \$1200 worth of Arbor Vitae to a landowner. ACD savings account balances remain strong. Munising Township and City of Munising accounting lines showing small positive balances still require input from an accountant to be removed, as those debts were paid and should be zeroed out. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Eriksen, to accept the treasury report and pay bills; All in favor, motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Eriksen asked about donation options for stakeholders. Kolton reported that the ACD homepage offers a donation option through the Square payment system. DeDecker asked about plans for the Chatham Community Garden. Watkeys and Kolton shared plans for hosting workshops, demonstration perennial plantings, etc. There are no plans to lease garden plots to the public at this time.

Motion made by DeDecker, seconded by Eriksen, to adjourn at 7:01pm; 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: 10/10/23