

## MINUTES

### For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board Tuesday, February 13th, 2024, 5:00 pm \* MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

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

**Guests:** None

**Public comment:** None

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

#### **Approve agenda:**

Highlen asked to add new business item g) Officer Roles Discussion. Cady asked to add new business item h) Small Projects Funding Initiative. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Bunce to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

#### **Approve minutes of January 9, 2024 regular meeting:**

Kolton asked to amend the minutes of 1/9/24 to change the recorder name to Alex Kolton. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Erikson, to approve the minutes of 1/9/24 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: Report received.**  
Cady reported that the new Coffee and Conservation event held at the Snack Bar in Eben Junction did not attract any landowners directly, but was a nice opportunity for internal planning. Watkeys and Kelso reported that they did make one new landowner contact casually during the event. Cady suggested that future work place additional emphasis on nutrient management planning and manure storage.
- b. **NRCS SC: No report received.**
- c. **FAP FORESTER: Report received.**  
Kelso reported that the women's snow shoe hike at Valley Spur organized by FAP and MSUE attracted 15 participants, who enjoyed the event.
- d. **PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.**
- e. **L2L CISMA: Report received.**
- f. **ACD DM: Report received.**  
Watkeys reported that the Munising Bay Overlook parcel Community Forest Plan was submitted to the US Forest Service, with the DNR Trust Fund proposal pending. Watkeys reported that planning is underway for a May 18 "Forestry for Birds" workshop at Clear Lake Rec Center.
- g. **ACD PC: Report received.**
- h. **MDARD: Report received.**
- i. **MAEAP: No report received.**

**Meeting Reports: None**

**Old Business:**

- a. **Annual Banquet, Gallery Coffee, 3/19/24**  
The meeting will consist of a 4:30pm social hour followed by the annual business meeting starting at 5:30pm. Ludecke will be running unopposed for reelection. The Cooking Carberrys are catering and Au Train Onota School's Robotics students will be presenting on their underwater ROV project.
- b. **2024 Tree Sale updates and schedules**  
Watkeys reported that tree sale promo is underway and orders are coming in. A calendar for volunteer sign-up was passed around.
- c. **Ag for Tomorrow Conference**  
Watkeys shared that ACD will have a booth at the conference. DeDecker asked the board for help with promotion.
- d. **Kolton reported stats from the new ACD website.** 4,451 people visited the site in its first 30 days, which was a large increase over previous traffic. The first 42 tree sale orders were reviewed: There has been a 17% increase in sales and the average order size has also increased. 20% of the initial inventory has been sold. Erikson asked about increasing inventory. Watkeys shared that some vendors are flexible, but others are not. Printing costs were cut in half by mailing postcards with a QR code vs. the whole catalogue.
- e. **GoDaddy payouts on hold**  
Watkeys reported that the GoDaddy website fraud concerns were resolved after sharing requested info and documentation with GoDaddy to demonstrate legitimacy of our online sales.

**New Business**

- a. **Summer Field Position job announcement**  
Watkeys shared a draft job description for seasonal help, which was previously budgeted for. DeDecker asked about fringe and ACA cost. Watkeys shared that the MACD group insurance plan is now available, if the position goes to full time.
- b. **EGLE Scrap Tire Collection Grants**  
Watkeys shared a new EGLE grant agreement, awarding \$9,000 for three scrap tire collection events/sites in Mathias, Onota and one additional township. There was a budget reduction from \$15,000 due to a parallel reduction from five locations in the previous project to three this year. Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker to approve the EGLE grant agreement. All in favor; motion passed.
- c. **EGLE HHW Grants put off until FY25**  
Watkeys reported that EGLE has put a hold on the HHW grants due to internal reorganization, but UPPCO offers home appliance pickup as an alternative to promote.
- d. **Shingleton Sportsman's coalition meeting on 2/22 at 6pm, Munising Township Hall**  
Watkeys reported that he was invited to present on ACD and DNR partnership, fish and deer habitat projects.
- e. **MCCD Banquet, 2/29, 6pm at Barrel and Beam, Marquette**  
Kelso reported that Dejarlais with the L2L CISMA will be presenting on the Butter Bur project at this event.
- f. **EUP CD Region Meeting**

ACD will be hosting the Region Meeting in Mid-August. UPREC and the North Farm are possible venues. Average attendance is 35-50 people. A weekday with farm tours, MDARD directors and local legislators invited was discussed.

**g. Officer Role Discussion**

This item will be on our April agenda for decision-making. The board discussed the idea of a succession plan where roles would advance annually. Erikson brought up our history of ad-hoc committees, none standing. DeDecker suggested having VP, President, and Trustee (Past Pres.) in planned succession, with Secretary and Treasurer serving at will. Erikson mentioned the idea of term limits. In general, the board feels comfortable continuing in their current capacities.

**h. Small Projects Initiative**

Watkeys shared his personal experience with CSP. Cady reported that minimum project payments have increased to \$4,000. Sometimes project budgets appear to exceed true costs, but this can also incentivize participation and conservation. Cady shared that CSP is requiring next level projects, more practice diversity and plant protection. CSP builds-in a "windfall" margin. Small projects and properties are getting padded a bit to meet the minimum dollar value. There is a need for support of very small projects/parcels that don't qualify. They may not require a full blown management plan. These projects are often referred to CDs and partner staff already. DeDecker raised the idea of coordinating a mini grant program to serve small projects. Cady suggested budgeting for this support. Bunce suggested offering a "buy a tree for others" program to raise support.

**Accept Treasury Report; pay bills:**

Watkeys reported that ACD millage income came in sooner than expected, making income overbudget for Feb. The balance sheet is in good shape, 30% spent YTD on average. Remy Battery, shown in the checking report, offers batteries for sale as well as also offering battery recycling. Our MTU contract and auditor bills were larger than expected. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Erikson to accept the Treasury Report. All in favor; motion carried.


**Public comment**

DeDecker suggested pursuing financial statement training for the board and staff, perhaps via MDARD or MACD. DeDecker shared that he has been invited to serve on the new MI DNR Deer Management Initiative LP committee.

**Adjourn**

Motion by Erikson, seconded by Ludecke to adjourn. All in favor; motion passed.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING: April 9, 2024, 5:00 pm**

  
JOHN HIGHLEN  
PRESIDENT - ACD BOARD  
4/9/2024