

MINUTES

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, April 9th, 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. Board members absent: Hans Eriksen. Associate board members present: Charlie Todd and Barb Isom. Staff present: Matt Watkeys, Alex Kolton, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso and Elise Desjarlais. Staff absent: Landen Tetil and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

Board members absent:

Staff absent:

Guests: Rachel Guth, MDARD

Public comment: None

Correspondence: Watkeys passed around correspondence received since the last regular meeting. This included the NACD dues statement and board resolutions from other conservation districts opposing the Governor's proposed budget with cuts to MAEAP and CD operating appropriations.

Approve agenda:

Watkeys asked to amend New Business item B to remove the word "conditional". Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

Approve minutes of January 9, 2024 regular meeting:

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to approve the minutes of 2/13/24. 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 on Farm Bill programs, options and participation. The high tunnel initiative supported by ACD was successfully rolled-out statewide with strong participation.

b. NRCS SC: No report received.

c. FAP FORESTER: Report received.

Kelso reported that the recent fruit tree pruning workshop was a success with 16 people attending.

d. PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.

e. L2L CISMA: Report received.

f. ACD DM: Report received.

Watkeys reported that the ACD DNR Trust Fund proposal was submitted on April 1. Watkeys also studied for and passed two exams for storm water, soil and sediment program administrators, which will allow ACD to assume responsibility for the program in Alger Co. The next step is a county resolution to transfer the program and ACD should take over in May or June. DeDecker asked how the new duties will fit in and Watkeys projects around 18 permits per year average.

g. ACD PC: Report received.

h. MDARD: Report received.

- i. **MAEAP: Report received.**
Guth highlighted FY22-23 aggregate CD reporting data including impressive numbers for grants received, funds leveraged and trees planted statewide.

Meeting Reports:

- Watkeys reported that the ACD Annual Meeting was well attended with good feedback. Gallery Coffee charged \$360 for AV and refreshments.
- Highlen reported on a meeting regarding Au Train boat launch with Onota Township, DNR and the Forest Service, who have co-managed the launch site recently.
- Watkeys reported that ACD did not receive the Clean Boats, Clean Waters grant proposed.
- Cady shared positive feedback on the 2024 Ag for Tomorrow Conference.

Old Business:

- a. **Summer Field Position Job announcement status**
Watkeys interviewed an individual from Marquette and had a discussion with another individual from Detroit, but local housing availability will be a challenge to recruiting. Desjarlais shared that Marquette CD is acting as the employer of record for Pictured Rocks and is also struggling to fill positions. Highlen and Bunce volunteered to serve on a personnel committee for interviews early next week.
- b. **Tree Sale updates**
Watkeys and Kolton reported that orders are down a bit from last year, but revenue is similar. Costs are also down to less catalog printing, etc. Around \$5k in day-of sales are likely. Inflation and more targeting marketing this year may explain some of the sales trends. The board discussed possibly mailing catalogs to those without internet service in the future.
- c. **Grant submissions and status – CBCW, DHIPI, GLRI, NACD UAC**
Watkeys reported that he is working on a new grants spreadsheet. ACD did not receive the Clean Boats, Clean Waters grant we proposed, as the funder reported an effort to “spread the wealth”. GLRI and NACD Urban Ag proposals are still under review. The DHIPI grant was recently awarded.

New Business

- a. **Approve MISG S&T subaward for 2024**
Watkeys shared a new subaward agreement from MCD. ACD was awarded the full amount requested to continue work at Coast Guard Point and beyond managing invasives. Lansing decision makers attended the partner event last year, which helped with the funding approval. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Bunce, to approve the MISG subaward. All in favor; motion carried.
- b. **2024 DHIPI Grant approval**
Watkeys shared that the ACD DHIPI proposal was fully funded. The project will include rehabbing a site planted previously and new plantings on the Lime Timber property, and one other private parcel in Deerton bordered by Commercial Forest Land. This project allows us to bill leftover tree sale stock. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to approve DHIPI Grant agreement. All in favor; motion carried.
- c. **NRCS Conservation Plan approvals.**
Cady shared four new conservation plans for board approval, to be funded through EQUIP. The board reviewed and signed the plan documents.
- d. **Capital Day, April 24, 2024, Lansing**
Watkeys shared an invitation to Capital Day for advocacy. The date is listed incorrectly, and should be June 4th, 2024.

- e. **MAEAP updates and discussion**
Guth shared info on the Governor's proposal to change MAEAP structure and funding. The proposal would take \$3M from CDs to hire 24 new MAEAP staff as state employees, with perhaps 1-2 staff assigned to the UP. There are currently 42 MAEAP staff housed with CDs. DeDecker shared his perspective on MAEAP staff turnover and compensation, which could benefit from the proposed changes. Cady shared how MAEAP feeds into NRCS contracts and gives verified farms preferential scoring on conservation applications.
- f. **CD Funding and Michigan proposed budget – Guth**
Guth shared that ACD needs to advocate for further investment in the UP and Lake Superior. Watkeys added that the Governor has proposed a reduction in funding from \$3M to \$2M, which would reduce the ACD allocation from \$40K to around \$26K.
- g. **Board organization**
The board discussed administrative roles and all agreed to continue in their current capacities. Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker, to retain and continue current director roles. All in favor; motion carried.
- h. **Stream Sampling 2024 and Salmon in the Classroom events**
May 14 and 17 have been selected for stream sampling in Munising and Grand Marais respectively. Watkeys asked, and DeDecker agreed, to sample the streams at UPREC again in 2024, early June and October timeline.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills:

Watkeys shared updates to ACD financial statements, including the Profit & Loss and Budget vs. Actual reports. MERS payments are appearing more frequently due to their timeline. Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke, to approve the Treasurer Reports and pay bills. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

DeDecker shared a DNR deer management survey and asked ACD to promote participation. Watkeys shared that the ACD Coffee and Conservation will be tomorrow, April 10th, at Gallery Coffee in Munising. Highlen shared that the Tioga Trail has been cleared for spring, with more tree planting to come. Also, TU National will be starting new projects on the Au Train River to improve access and habitat. Bunce shared that Au Train River clean-up is complete for spring.

Adjourn

Motion by Bunce, seconded by Ludecke to adjourn at 6:58 pm. All in favor; motion passed.

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

Submitted by James DeDecker, Secretary, and Matt Watkeys, District Manager

These minutes are subject to approval until signed below.

APPROVED:  _____ DATE: 5/14/24

John Highlen, Chairman OR James DeDecker, Secretary