

MINUTES

For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board
Tuesday, January 13th, 2026, 5:00 pm, located at MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham

Call to order: Chairman Bunce called the meeting to order at 5:00pm

Board members present: Rowan Bunce, Charlie Todd, Hillary Ludecke, James DeDecker, Hans Eriksen, Barb Isom (associate)

Board members absent: None

Staff present: Alex Kolton, Eryn Grupido, Helena Moleski, Misa Cady, Sara Kelso and Rachel Guth

Staff absent: Landen Tetil, Holly Wendrick-Moss and Elise Desjarlais

Guests: ~~Hamilton~~ Hamton Waring

Public comment: ~~Hamilton~~ Hamton Waring introduced himself as a prospective ACD Board member

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

Approve agenda: Kolton requested the addition of "New Business Item F: Chatham Community Garden Name". Motion by Todd, seconded by Ludecke, to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor; motion carried.

Approve minutes of December 9th, 2025, regular meeting: Kolton requested an amendment to change Grupido's role to District Manager. He also added a note clarifying ACD electronic file migration process. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to approve the minutes of December 9th, 2025. All in favor; motion carried.

Board and Staff Reports: review written reports

NRCS SC: Received

Cady shared info on CSP focused on active management vs. conservation planning (as in EQIP). She noted that CSP recipients need to have a management plan in place and shared examples of local CSP projects.

CTAI Conserv: Received

FAP FORESTER: Received

Kelso reported that she attended the MACD conference. She is busy planning future workshops and meeting with landowners as available. She is also helping to mentor new FAP foresters in the UP.

L2L CISMA:

ACD DD (AK): Received

Kolton reported that ACD QuickBooks migration is mostly complete. Northern Lights CU has agreed to accommodate QB online to accommodate ACD. Tree sale catalogs are being updated, including the web version. Kolton will be using Pride printing ~~again~~ this year. Grupido and Moleski are completing pesticide applicator certification. The first three ALTRAN rides to food pantries using ACD funds were requested by community members.

ACD DM (EG): Received

Grupido reported that she attended the MACD conference. ACD was awarded the MDARD Regenerative Ag Field Day grant and is finalizing the agreement.

ACD DC (HM): Received

Moleski reported that Burt and Munising schools are engaged in the ACD t-shirt logo contest. The community will vote on designs at the ACD Annual Meeting and the winning designs will be printed on t-shirts to be sold during tree sale. Moleski is also launching an ACD book club in February with the book Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

MDARD: Received

Guth shared a new MDARD grant program for Regenerative Farmer Networks. She also reported on progress of the MAEAP to Regen Ag transition. MAEAP is transitioning to a competitive grant program with funding for thirty-eight positions available for three year appointments/awards. There is currently only one MAEAP position in the UP in Delta Co (Wendrick-Moss). The Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac position is currently vacant because the district board has opted out. CDs can provide a letter of support for joint requests. The new positions will be Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) technicians. The old MAEAP Verifier role will be merged with Regen Ag as Field Coordinators, which will likely be Michelle Sweeten for the UP. Erin Satchell has recently left MDARD. Iron-Baraga Co CD might be interested in applying for a CTAP person.

Guth also noted that an updated CD Operations Manual will be available soon. Director trainings will be offered again in 2026 using Macomb Co operations funds.

MAEAP: Received

PRODUCE SAFETY: Received

ABC FORESTER:

Meeting Reports: Kolton reported that he and Grupido met with an orchard company focused on training orchardists. He is considering training for ACD staff on fruit tree management as a popular topic among clients. ACD purchased 50 books on fruit tree care from the company at \$13.95 each, which come with 50 online course registrations for ACD staff and others. The books and course access will be distributed through ACD and FAP programs as participant incentives.

Kolton also reported that he has scheduled meetings with Rock River, Mathias, and Limestone Townships to explore their needs and expand our partnerships.

Old Business:

- a. 2026 "Conservation Celebration" & Elections: Recap Nominations, Keynote Confirmed
Kolton reported that planned nominations are complete with the submissions from Waring and Todd. The ACD Annual Meeting keynote will be a student from Burt Schools who partnered with ACD on a DNR DHPI grant project, as well as other participating landowners and a DNR rep. Gallery Coffee will provide the venue and food. 63 people attended last year's annual meeting.

New Business:

- a. (tentative) Introduction, Hampton Waring, active board nominee
See Public Comment above.
- b. R. Guth, MDARD Ops Review- Legal Requirements and Succession Planning
Guth presented updated Operations Review documents, including a new Succession Planning form. The Board reviewed ACD compliance with elements of the Legal Requirements and Succession Planning documents. ~~ACD was found to be 100% compliant with the legal requirements.~~ Succession planning goals for the next year include 1) providing board access to passwords, 2) developing a written succession plan, 3) developing a shared board calendar.
- c. EGLE Coastal Restoration Grant, Approval Required - partner with MDOT, 1-to-1 match required
Kolton reported that the EGLE grant deadline has been extended to Jan 30, 2026. ACD is considering a project proposal focused on Au Train Beach erosion prevention planning and dune stewardship workshops. MDOT is in support, but does not have match available to commit. The program requires a 1:1 match. Total cost for the proposed project is \$27K with a 2027 timeline and ACD responsible for half of that, mostly in-kind. Grupido is seeking a board resolution approving the grant application. Motion by DeDecker, seconded by Todd, to provide an ACD Board resolution in support of an EGLE proposal and commitment of \$13,500 in-kind match. All in favor; motion carried.
- d. Policy Review
- Overnight Travel
Kolton shared an updated overnight travel policy for Board review. DeDecker suggested clarifying the criteria for overnight travel reimbursement and setting a timeline for requests. For example, reimbursements are allowed when two criteria are met: 1) two or more consecutive days of work away, or an especially early or late event time *and* 2) the work location is at least 50 miles away. The Board agreed on a 30-day timeline for requesting travel reimbursement.

- e. Opening & Closing of District Bank Accounts
Kolton reported that ~~historically~~ only one signatory ~~has been~~ is required to ~~open or~~ close an ACD bank account per bank policy. He suggested updating ACD policy to require a Board vote, written approval, and two signatures to close a District account. Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Eriksen, to require a Board vote to open/close ACD bank accounts. All in favor; motion carried.
- f. Chatham Community Garden Name
Kolton suggested renaming the Chatham Community Garden to refocus on its purpose for education and communicate that clearly to potential funders. He suggested "learning park". The space is not functioning as a traditional community garden. Possible terms to include that were discussed are "Community, Education, Learning and Park". This discussion was tabled for future conversation.
- g. Website Development: .gov vs. .com
Kolton shared that ACD is considering moving to a .gov website, which could enhance legitimacy, but restricts some commercial activities. The Board discussed that moving to .gov would require a redundant .com site for sales. All agreed by consensus to stay with the current ACD .com site.

Accept Treasury Report; pay bills

Kolton presented ACD financial statements as of Dec 31, 2025 and the current Budget vs Actual in an updated format. He shared accounting notes prior to the meeting via email. A new payroll report was include due to the ACD QuickBooks online and direct deposit transition. Kolton requested Board approval of a \$590 line item increase for vehicle maintenance, a mileage reimbursement line increase of \$1,500, and a new computer for Grupido valued at \$562. Funds for these amendments will come from the Audit expense line, which will not be incurred in FY26. Motion by Todd, seconded by DeDecker, to reallocate \$2,652 as requested. All in favor; motion carried. Motion by Todd, seconded by Eriksen, to approve the financial statements and pay bills. All in favor; motion carried.

Public comment

Isom supported having diverse foods available at the ACD Annual.

Kolton announced that he will be taking 1-2 weeks off for a personal matter.

Adjourn: Motion by Ludecke, seconded by Todd, to adjourn at 7:40pm. All in favor; motion carried.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, February 10th at 5:00 pm

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

APPROVED: 

DATE: 2-27-26

Rowan Bunce, Chairman OR Hilary Ludecke, Vice President