

**Alger CD Board of Director Minutes**  
**For the regular meeting of the Alger Conservation District Board**  
**Tuesday, December 10th, 2024, 5:00 pm \* MSU Research and Extension Center, Chatham**

**Call to order:** On the above date, Chairperson John Highlen called the ACD's regular meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**Board members present:** James DeDecker, John Highlen, and Rowan Bunce.

**Board members absent:** Hans Eriksen and Hilary Ludecke.

**Associate board members present:** None

**Associate board members absent:** Barb Isom and Charlie Todd.

**Staff present:** Alex Kolton, Eryn Grupido, Sara Kelso, and Misa Cady.

**Staff absent:** Olivia Engelhardt, Elise Desjarlais, Amy Frye, Landen Tetil and Holly Wendrick-Moss.

**Guests:** None

**Public comment:** None

**Approve agenda:**

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

**Approve minutes of November 12th, 2024, Regular Meeting:**

Approval will be moved to the next regular meeting in January to finalize unofficial minutes.

**Board and Staff Reports: review written reports:**

Written reports were reviewed by the board and highlighted by staff.

- a. **NRCS SC: No report received.** Cady verbally reported that the minimum annual payment increased to \$4K. Contracts are moving forward as funding is approved. CSP renewals are up, and there are already 40 EQUIP applicants for 2025.
- b. **FAP FORESTER: Report received.** Kelso highlighted that she's been able to follow up with landowners and has updated forest pest alerts for the office.
- d. **PRODUCE SAFETY: Report received.**
- e. **L2L CISMA: Report received.**
- f. **ACD DD: Report received.** The City of Munising has approached Kolton to assist in outreach for a source water protection project in the upcoming year. Kolton reported that the district could assist in circulating materials and educating city residents through existing communication mediums.
- g. **ACD DC: Report received.** Grupido announced the District would create a space in its newsletter and on social accounts to highlight the work of a local farmer every quarter, called the 'Featured Farmer,' and invited all to share this information with any farmers they think would be interested.
- h. **MDARD: Report received.**
- i. **MAEAP: No report received.**

**Meeting Reports:** DeDecker reported attendance at the MAEAP Regional Advisory Committee meeting and the resulting evolution of Wendrick-Moss's role now titled Conservation Tech incorporating MDARD's new Regenerative Ag program (e.g. soil health sampling) in addition to MAEAP with the hope of developing achievable regenerative agricultural goals for assisted farmers.

## Old Business:

a. **2024 Audit Complete**

Kolton reported the 2024 audit is now complete. The District was found compliant with all federal and state mandates. A virtual packet was included in the board documents for review. Hardcopies were provided by Kolton for those present at the meeting.

b. **Policy Review: Background Checks**

Kolton presented the updated background check policy with Eriksen's input and approval. Discussion reaffirmed that the policy covers all hired staff and potential new staff who undergo a background check if the board identifies it as essential to the position. Substance abuse testing is not covered as it is located in the personnel handbook under a separate policy.

Motion by Bunce and seconded by DeDecker to accept the policy with Eriksen's suggestion. All in favor; motion carried.

## New Business

a. **Work Agreement Amendments for District Coordinators:**

Work Agreement Amendments for the District Coordinators were updated to allow them to write a higher salary than they are paid by ACD into grant proposals as supplemental income.

Motion by DeDecker and seconded by Bunce to accept and sign the presented Work Agreements with District Coordinators Grupido and Engelhardt. All in favor; motion carried.

b. **Grants update:**

The District staff is actively tracking the release of and pursuing multiple grants. Contractor NRConnections has compiled a list of potential grants and is introducing Kolton to related essential contacts; pursuit of a specific grant is not currently underway.

NACD UAC: 1st report due in January to include Agri-palooza. This project will be quiet until the spring.

Scrap Tire: Awaiting the release of RFP from EGLE, pursuing four dumpsters to split between Wetmore and Mathias Townships. Townships are on rotation for this grant as long as it continues.

Household Hazardous Waste Removal: Awaiting release of RFP from EGLE.

DHIPI: Awaiting release of RFP from the DNR. Staff Forester Kelso reports the process is delayed but anticipates its release.

UFI: Upon approval of purchasing funds, the district intends to apply for further assistance in developing the community forest - Overlook Bay Community Forest.

Farm-to-School: The district intends to apply for the USDA Farm-to-School Implementation Grant 2025 to enhance and create school gardens through the county and further develop the Chatham Community Garden into the Alger Learning Garden and Agro-Forestry Trail. The proposal is underway and application is due January 10th.

Americana: District Coordinator Engelhardt is developing a proposal to increase public native pollinator gardens.

Clean Boats Clean Waters: District Coordinator Grupido submitted the CBCW 2025 proposal on November 25th. Award announcements are expected in March.

c. **Conservation Needs Assessment**

Kolton reported meeting with the District Directors of Schoolcraft, Delta, and Marquette to discuss their previous approach and turn out of the required CNA. Kolton has launched a survey to all the CD Directors of Michigan to gather feedback on how CNAs have performed throughout the state. A draft CNA has been completed and will be sent to partners for feedback shortly. Discussion continued to address ideas to help understand and summarize open-ended questions for district analysis and operations planning.

**Accept Treasury Report; pay bills**

Kolton presented ACD financial statements as of December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and advised updating the presentation format to streamline financial communications. The board reviewed the report and confirmed that the format was complete.

Motion by Bunce, seconded by DeDecker, to accept the Treasury Reports and pay the bills. All in favor; motion carried.

**Public comment**

Highlen offered an additional dog pen for the Chatham Community Garden bee hives. Kolton agreed it may help to expand and will pursue in spring. Highlen announced MI Trout Unlimited will be surveying for didymo throughout the UP this next year. Sample kits will be available for our use at stream sites if we'd like to participate.

**Adjourn**

Motion by Rowan, seconded by Dedecker, to adjourn at 6:12 pm. All in favor; motion carried.

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 5:00 pm**

Grupido has transcribed these minutes.

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

APPROVED:  DATE: 1/14/25

John Highlen, Chairperson      OR      Rowan Bunce, Vice Chair