



St. Joseph County Conservation District
693 E. Main Street
Centreville, MI 49032
(269) 467-6336 x5

Board Minutes February 19, 2025

3:02pm Call to Order by Howard Avildsen

Directors Present:

Howard Avildsen, Board Chair
Todd Hironimus, Vice Chair
Chad Clark, Board Treasurer
Carol Higgins, Board Member

Directors Absent:

Dan Blasius, Board Member
Nelson Evers, Associate Member

Staff Present:

Shaun Grace, CISMA Coordinator
Eric Pretzlav, District Technician
Kaitlin Renchan, Conservation Specialist

Introductions / Visitors:

Jack Knorek, MDARD Regional Coordinator (SW Michigan)

Additions / Deletions to Agenda: H. Avildsen motioned to approve the agenda as presented, C. Higgins seconded, motion carried.

Public Comment: None.

Approval of January 2025 Board Minutes: Board members identified several errors, including an incorrect board meeting date and repeated bullet points. E. Pretzlav made the necessary corrections. C. Higgins motioned to approve the updated January Board Minutes, C. Clark seconded, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: C. Clark motioned to approve the January Financials and have them placed on file, C. Higgins seconded, motion carried.

Correspondence Reports:

- **Administrator**—Written.
- **MAEAP**—Written.
- **CISMA**—Spoken. S. Grace provided an update on the status of the 2025 SLF surveys grant. He summarized his meeting with Don at the SJ Road Commission, where plans were discussed to continue stop sign/guardrail management, as well as

brush management in areas previously worked on by The Daltons, Inc. Treatment of Tree of Heaven will take place within the mow path, and 17 Knotweed sites have been identified for "Do Not Mow" sign installation. S. Grace also reported the completion of a kayak trailer built with T. Hironimus for GLRI/River cleanup equipment transport. He met with Jaymes from SJ Parks & Rec to discuss addressing invasive bittersweet on bike trails. On March 11, S. Grace will present on "Plants of St. Joseph County" to the Meek's Mill Garden Club in Constantine. Due to a scheduling conflict with the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition Annual Meeting on March 19-20 in St. Ignace, he will be unable to attend the SJCCD Annual Meeting.

- **CTAI**—Written.
- **Conservation Specialist**—K. Renehan updated the Board on EGLE data recovery efforts and the development of an ArcGIS interactive watershed mapping tool. She submitted a grant proposal to the MiCorps Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program for spring macroinvertebrate collections in St. Joseph County, and is preparing a proposal for the Great Lakes Fishery Trust to expand road-stream crossing assessments in Branch, Cass, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph counties, due by Feb. 21. K. Renehan also sought input on the annual spring native plant sale, comparing Wildtype costs with last year's profits. Moving forward, she proposed exclusively selling 2-year-old native plants grown from seeds stratified by SJCCD and also discussed the potential for hosting an additional plant sale in the fall. H. Avildsen motioned to approve up to \$600 for this year's Wildtype plant order, C. Clark seconded, motion carried.
- **NACD**—Written.
- **MDARD**—Written and spoken. J. Knorek provided an update on upcoming changes to programs under the new administration. He noted that some letterheads are now requiring official approval. He discussed the CTAP program, which is state-funded, and CTAI, which is funded half by the state and half federally. Additionally, J. Knorek mentioned that EQIP payments are currently frozen.
- **Board of Directors**—Spoken. C. Higgins inquired about at-risk farmers in St. Joseph County to better engage with state and local legislators. Efforts will be made to gather region-specific information from NRCS District Conservationist Chuck Ronk. Additionally, C. Higgins shared that someone will be stepping in for Rivka Hodgkinson during her 6-week maternity leave.

Old Business

- **Conflict of Interest:** None.
- **MiClass:** Tabled until further notice.

New Business

- **Tree Sale - Barn #28, May 2-3 Pickup Dates:** H. Avildsen confirmed that his enclosed trailer will be available for order pickups from nurseries in April.

PA116: Clark Farms

Adjournment: C. Clark motioned to adjourn at 4:08pm, C. Higgins seconded, motion carried.

Next Board Meeting: March 19, 2025 at the St. Joseph County Conservation District offices at 3:00pm prior to the Annual Meeting event at the St. Joseph County ISD Building from 6:00–8:00pm.

Board Chair Signature: Howard Childsen

Date: March 19 2025