



St. Joseph County Conservation District
Board Meeting 6pm
693 E. Main Street
Centreville, MI 49032
(269) 467-6336 x5

**Board Meeting Minutes
February 18th 2026**

6:00 pm Call to Order by Board Chair Chad Clark

Directors Present:

Chad Clark, Chair
Todd Hironimus, Treasurer
Carol Higgins, Member

Directors Absent:

Daniel Blasius, Vice Chair
Mike Sherman, Member

Associate Board Members:

Howard Avildson

Staff Present:

Mike Censke

Call to Order / Approval of Agenda

Introductions/Visitors: None

Additions/Deletions to Agenda: Discussion on minor date corrections/handwritten notes on the agenda—no formal change needed.

Approval of January Board Minutes: Higgins motioned to accept the January Board minutes. Hironimus second, motion passed.

Treasurer's Report – January

- Significant influx of ~\$80,000 from the county (township/county funds), improving financial position.

- Assets reported around \$156,000 (including some fairground/cycling funds); checking and MI CLASS accounts both over \$50,000.
- Total liquid assets (checking + savings + MI CLASS) ~\$120,000; receivables include ~\$36,700 in pending grant funds (NACD reimbursement).
- Liabilities ~\$11,000; net position strong but some confusion on timing of \$80k deposit vs. expenses.
- Grant reporting/reimbursement process described as turbulent/new, working with Chessa at NACD.
- Comparison to prior months limited due to missing December figures; overall positive outlook.
- Motion: Higgins motioned to approve January financials as presented. Hironimus second. Motion approved.

Correspondence / Administrator Report

Administrator: None

CTAP: Written/Verbal

CTAI: None

CISMA: Written

MDARD: Written

NRCS: None

Staff / Mike's Report (December–January Highlights)

- Completed Michigan Naturalist certification (MSU Extension; 3-year term).
- Created reference notebook of ~26 natural communities in St. Joseph County (from Michigan Natural Features Inventory; includes species, soils, management info).
- Outreach: Attended Conservation Club meeting with Shaun; gave brief presentation.
- Centerville Village Trail project: Funded by Downtown Development Authority; recent meeting held; design finalization underway; contractor to start this Spring; expanded to include 200×150 ft dog park across from Nottawa Gas/Yoders.
 - Potential linkage to high school cross-country trail under discussion (concerns from superintendent Chad Brady about public access during school activities); follow-up meeting next Wednesday February 25th.
- Enrolled in MSU Lakes online training (6-week course for lakes certification).
- Renovated district trailer (photos available).
- Attended Pheasants Forever meeting, exploring partnership for farm field day featuring MAEAP Program Forest Wetland Habitat System (target late spring/early summer).

- Upcoming: Water use reporting season (farmers due April 1; peak expected late March).
- MAEAP Stats: 14 farm visits, 6 water samples submitted, 69 risk reductions.
 - Highlight: Installed gutter systems on 2 livestock farms to divert clean roof runoff from manure lots (prevents nitrate leaching to groundwater).
- 10 systems awaiting verification; backlog concerns due to limited verifier availability (Josh Appleby covering expanded territory); 3 completed so far this year; targeting 20 by end of March (on pace for 40-goal grant year).
- NACD: Fingerprinting/Link pass issues ongoing; 4th quarter/year-end report completed.
- Additional: Completed Wildland Firefighter training

Old Business

- Conflict of interest: None
- Mushroom workshop: March 25, 6–8 PM, American Legion (Sturgis?); \$30 fee; includes take-home mushroom kit; promotion needed (print brochures, Ethan to post at libraries/etc.).
- Annual meeting promotion: Check chamber calendar, Facebook, possible radio; Shaun to speak; beef up advertising for both events.
- Tree sale: ~12 orders so far (early season); expected increase with spring.
- Discussion on tree pricing differences (Alpena County cheaper; quantity/supplier factors suspected).
- Administrator position: Posted; interviews scheduled March 23.

New Business

Stewardship Week: April 26–May 2; theme “Soil: Where It All Begins.”

- Coloring contest, photo contest (adult category), activities planned (spinning wheel prizes, seed packets, coloring pages).
- Tie-in with tree sale (end of week); possible canopy setup for kids’ activities if weather allows; fairgrounds busy that Saturday—opportunity for visibility.
- **Conservation Tour** (4th grade): May 12th & 13th (week after tree sale).
- **Annual Meeting Awards:**

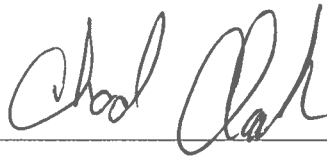
- 4H Club (river cleanup volunteers; contacted Ed Klein; possible T-shirts/cans/hats; MSU rep attending).
- Howard Avildson (individual recognition).
- Faye Doyle (Faith in Flora Flower Farm) – for hosting soil health training; “Conservation Partner” award.
- Total 3 awards; confirm orders/placement with Carolyn.
- **Annual Local Foods Dinner:** Friday, August 14 at Farren Hall (Riverfest weekend); they handle food/publicity/setup; 80 tickets max; ~\$5,000 profit share to District if sold out.
 - Ideas for use of funds: Watershed/bridge signs (like Kalamazoo County drains); roadside cleanup program; support local food/community gardens; small producer assistance.
 - Discussion on local food challenges, community gardens (Sturgis example; past Constantine proposal; Menden water tower plots).

PA116: None

Adjournment: Hironimus motioned to adjourn at 7:13pm, Higgins second, Motion carried.

Next Meeting: Annual Meeting March 18th, will be held at the St. Joseph County ISD at 6:00pm.

Board Chair Signature: _____



Date: _____

3-18-26