



Van Buren Conservation District

Minutes of April 26, 2023 Regular Board Meeting

Minutes Prepared by: Abbie Bristol, Strike Team Coordinator & Emilly Hickmott, Deputy Administrator

VanTassel called the regular April 26, 2023 business meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Roll Call of Board Directors:

- Chairperson, Bill VanTassel – present
- Vice-chairperson, Jan Petersen – present
- Treasurer, Carl Druskovich – present
- Secretary, Paulette Rybarski – absent
- Member, Ron Klein – present

Others Present

- Emilly Hickmott, Deputy Administrator
- Abbie Bristol, Strike Team Coordinator
- Jack Knorek, Regional Coordinator, Southwest Michigan Conservation Programs
- Jeff Douglas, NRCS District Conservationist

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to accept the April 26, 2023 regular board meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Minutes: Motion by Petersen, 2nd by VanTassel to accept the March 22, 2023 regular board meeting minutes as presented. Druskovich abstains. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None.

Treasurer's Report:

- Financial statements for March 2023 were presented. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to approve the March 2023 financial statements as presented. Motion carried.
- The bills of April 2023 were presented. Motion by Klein, 2nd by Petersen to approve the payment of the bills of April 2023 as presented. Motion carried.
- Payroll & Paid Time Off Accumulation Report for March 2023 was presented. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to approve payment of payroll & paid time off accumulation report for March 2023 as presented. Motion carried.

Old Business:

- **USDA Leasing Opportunity:** Druskovich shared that the project seems to have stalled due to expenses.
- **VBCD Property Update:** Hickmott reported Kris Nelson requested an update from VBCD. Druskovich reported he emailed them and is working on setting up a meeting.
- **VBCD Foundation:** Hickmott reported that work is ongoing.
- **Management Team Update:** Hickmott reported the Emerging Leader Academy was useful, looking forward to continuing it later in the year. Announcement of transition will be at the end of this fiscal year. Hickmott will draft announcement language for board review.
- **2023 Tree Seedling Sale Update:** Hickmott reported that tree sale went very well. Preliminary financial numbers look good, a full report from Sinclair forthcoming.



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- **2023 Annual Meeting:** Hickmott reported that staff has discussed farmer/conservationist of the year to be announced at Annual Meeting. No objections from the board regarding staff suggestions.
- **MACD Summer Conference: June 5-6, 2023:** Hickmott shared that certain staff are attending and invited the board to register. Knorek asked if the district pays for board members to attend the conference; Hickmott and Druskovich answered in the affirmative.
- **VBCD 80th Anniversary:** Hickmott shared potential ideas for special recognition of the anniversary. Invited board members to give ideas. Druskovich liked the idea of free swag, including Food, Farm, & Fun Guide and calendar.
- **Policy Review:** Klein suggested sending policies to attorney for review. Hickmott shared that the attorney sent drafts back with notes on the first batch. She will review and provide for the board at the next meeting.
 - **Disciplinary, Grievance, and Termination Policy 2023.01 (Second Review)**
 - **Equal Opportunity Employment Policy 2023.01 (Second Review)**

New Business:

- **Quarterly Review:**
 - **FY 23 Plan of Work/Business Plan:** Hickmott requested review and questions regarding plans sent to the board.
 - **FY 23 Budget:** Druskovich reported that numbers are available on monthly financials.
 - **Fund Development:** Druskovich reported that he and Sinclair are keeping an eye on interests and rates.
- **MACD Capitol Day: May 18, 2023:** Hickmott reported that another Capital Day has been organized by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD). MACD is gearing up to ask the legislature for additional district funding. Hickmott and Sinclair will be attending. Hickmott invited the Board to attend and take part.
- **Five-year Long-range Plan:** Hickmott reported that a new template was sent along. Will be filled out with July reporting.
 - **Vision, Values, & Priorities:** Hickmott requested input for this section. Discussion was had. Hickmott will draft for the Board to review and discuss in May. Petersen will be sending Hickmott some of her thoughts on the subject. Hickmott will be gone during the discussion in May but will provide the documents prior.
- **Van Buren Youth Fair Ag Olympics Sponsorship Request:** Druskovich suggested designing a patch for the kids that take part. VanTassel suggested not adding a date. Motion by Druskovich, 2nd by Klein to approve the Van Buren Youth Fair Ag Olympics Committee sponsorship request in the amount of \$100.00 with up to \$400.00 additional to be spent on a commemorative patch for the Ag Olympics participants. Motion carried.



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Committee Updates:

- **Fund Development (Petersen, Rybarski, Sinclair):** No meeting took place. Discussion was had about resource recovery program funding.
- **Property Development (Druskovich, VanTassel):** Druskovich reported that a plan is needed from the architecture firm and was requested. This will provide options for the Board on how to move forward on this project.

Farmland and Open Space Preservation [Part 361 (Public Act 451 of 1994)] Application for Review: None.

Board Director Reports:

- **Chairperson:** VanTassel shared that the proposed Crandall Line Project has been terminated. Almena Township has two new trustees. A prescribed burn is scheduled for May 6 behind the Almena Township Hall, rain date May 13 – the District staff is invited. **Vice Chairperson:** Petersen praised the Food, Farm, and Fun Guide. **Treasurer:** Druskovich discussed the importance of accurate information and expressed appreciation for Sinclair and Will's financial management. The paperwork and communication is better than it ever has been. The Decatur Fire Department and Auxiliary is doing a yard sale. Treasurer discussed conversations with Mercantile. Druskovich discussed the state of the John Deere Drill; Hartman and Mead are doing well with the program. **Secretary:** None. **Member:** Klein shared that he is preparing for the June 14 Grazing Workshop and discussed work he's been doing to learn more about roadway ditches, culverts, and county drain maintenance.

Van Buren Conservation District Staff Reports:

- **Deputy Administrator's Report:** Hickmott shared that Maple Grove Elementary expressed their plans to create a mileage sign with donors' names and distance from Maple Grove on it for the mini-grant project that was approved in March 2023. Other ideas would be to plant a tree in honor of the donor with a plaque, and we will have all donors listed on the pavilion (that part is phase 2 of the project and the hope is to be done by 2025), and provided a written report. **Administrator's Report:** none. **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Report:** written. **CISMA Report:** Bristol shared about the Spotted Lantern Fly training that she and Florian attended recently and provided a written report. **MAEAP Report:** written. **NACD/NRCS TA Report:** written. **NRCS CT Report:** written. **Outreach Report:** written. **Produce Safety Report:** written. **Resource Recovery Report:** written.

Cooperating Agency Reports:

- **FSA Report:** None. **Land Preservation Board Report:** None. **MDARD Report:** Knorek provided a verbal and a written. **MSUE Report:** – None. **NRCS:** Douglas reported that the initial Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) selections saw 19 applications pre-approved, and the Inflation Reduction Act funds also saw 3 applications approved. The estimated cost is approximately \$1.5 million, which is about four times the amount obligated last fiscal year. Hartman and Francisco provided excellent



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support to NRCS through the application processes. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) rankings are due soon. **Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) Foundation:** None.

Other Correspondence:

- **Notice of Application: HPS-CEVE-NT3N7 (80-47580 Blue Star Highway-Coloma)**
- **Notice of Special Exception Application Received HPS-CEVE-NT3N7**

Next Board Meeting: May 24, 2023 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079

Adjournment: Motion by Druskovich, 2nd by Klein to adjourn the meeting at 11:35 AM. Motion carried.

APPROVED:

Signature

Date