



Van Buren Conservation District

Minutes of October 25, 2023 Regular Board Meeting

Minutes Prepared by: Carlie Southland, Conservation Associate and Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

VanTassel called the regular Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) October 25, 2023 business meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Roll Call of Board Directors:

- Chairperson, Bill VanTassel - present
- Vice-chairperson, Jan Petersen - present
- Treasurer & Personnel Liaison, Carl Druskovich - present
- Secretary, Paulette Rybarski - present
- Member, Ron Klein - present

Others Present

- Emily Hickmott, Executive Director
- Kim Sinclair, Administrator
- Carlie Southland, Conservation Associate
- Lucas Hartman, Conservation Technician

Approval of Agenda: Hickmott requested that "Hunter's Access Program" and "2023 Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Executive Committee Nominations" be added to New Business. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Rybarski to approve the October 25, 2023 regular board meeting agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Minutes: Klein asks for the "Draft" watermark to be lighter in color. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to accept the September 27, 2023 regular board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None.

Treasurer's Report:

- Financial statements for September 2023 were presented and discussed. Motion by Rybarski, 2nd by Klein to approve the September 2023 financial statements as presented. Motion carried.
- The bills of October 2023 were presented and discussed. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by VanTassel to approve the payment of bills of October 2023 as presented. Motion carried.
- Payroll and Paid Time Off Accumulation Report for September 2023 was presented. Motion by Klein, 2nd by Rybarski to approve payment of payroll for September 2023 as presented. Motion carried.
- **FY 23 Budget & Appropriations Act Amendments:** Sinclair presented the FY 23 Van Buren Conservation District Budget & Appropriations Act Amendments. Discussion was had. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to approve the Van Buren Conservation District FY 23 Budget & Appropriation Act Amendments as presented. Roll Call: Rybarski - yes, Petersen - yes, Klein - yes, Druskovich - yes, VanTassel - yes. Motion carried.
- Quarterly Review:
 - FY 24 Budget - Sinclair shared that the first month of the budget has completed.
 - Investments - Sinclair reported that there are no investments.



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Old Business:

- **VBCD Foundation:** Sinclair says she has some ideas and would like to meet at the beginning of 2024.
- **Grant Application Submissions:**
 - **Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) | Creating a Culture of Resilience Capacity 2023 Grant Funding Opportunity | Protecting Van Buren County Coastal Areas Through Outreach and Education | \$24,699.28 | expected decision date January 1, 2024:** Hickmott shared application has been recommended for approval; no agreement in hand. Hickmott discussed the potential of hiring another permanent CISMA member through this grant.
 - **EGLE | Van Buren County Municipal Transfer Station Recycling Infrastructure Project | \$500,000.00 awarded | \$0 match:** Hickmott updated that \$500,000.00 was offered from EGLE. Original request was over \$1 million. The Recycling Partnership (TRP) has offered \$150,000.00 in additional funding for qualifying Townships. Project budget was discussed.

New Business:

- **Quarterly Review:**
 - **Business Plan** - Hickmott shared an update on VBCD events from the first month of FY 24.
- **FY 23 Audit:** Sinclair shared that the FY 23 Audit has been scheduled, and a date is yet to be set.
- **Haydon Woods Management** Druskovich shared the history of Haydon Woods in Hamilton Township that the VBCD was deeded. The property was rented for hunting in the past, but this was discontinued. Staff recently found a camera and side-by-side tracks on the property as evidence of trespassing. Staff took down the camera and returned to the owner, put up No Trespassing signs, and will be routinely checking the property. Hickmott shared that the Natural Features Inventory will be back in the spring. Discussion was had about future signage.
- **Hunter's Access Program (HAP):** Hickmott shared that the DNR reached out about a Van Buren County landowner who has interest in the program. Discussion was had to consider entering into an agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to facilitate HAP for FY 24. Motion by Druskovich, 2nd by Klein to forgo participation facilitating HAP for FY 24. Motion carried. Staff will continue to inform landowners of the DNR's program.
- **2023 Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Executive Committee Nominations:** Hickmott shared that the board should have gotten an email about nominations and candidates. MACD encouraged sending a board member to vote at the MACD Winter Conference. Hickmott encouraged the board directors to attend if they have not been to the MACD conference before. Druskovich shared that it is beneficial to attend but does not know the candidates well enough to vote himself. Discussion was had.

Committee Updates:

- **Fund Development (Petersen, Rybarski, Sinclair):**



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- **Quarterly Review:** The committee will meet in November for 2025 and 2026 millage information discussions.
- **Next Meeting:** To be set
- **Property Development (Druskovich, VanTassel):** Druskovich presented schematic site plans for the VBCD Red Arrow Property that were received from Schley Nelson. The west-facing driveway cannot be placed anywhere else per Van Buren County Road Commission. This plan is a preliminary concept and layout. Druskovich wants to know if this plan is adequate and asks for any suggestions or edits. Discussion was had about the plans. Hickmott thanked Druskovich for all the work he has done putting the plans together with the architects. Druskovich requested that staff and board provide feedback by the end of November. Hickmott will summarize requests and send email to staff and board. Discussion had about funding options.
 - **Next Meeting:** To be set

Farmland and Open Space Preservation [Part 361 (Public Act 451 of 1994)] Application for Review:

- Ned Totzke Properties LLC | Parcel Numbers: 80-12-010-003-01 and 80-12-010-007-00 - Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Druskovich to recommend for approval the PA 116 request made by Ned Totzke Properties LLC regarding Parcel Tax ID Numbers 80-12-010-003-01 and 80-12-010-007-00. Motion carried.

Board Director Reports:

- **Chairperson:** VanTassel shared Almena Township road work accomplishments and their Planning Commission wetland overlay project.
- **Vice Chairperson:** None.
- **Treasurer:** None.
- **Secretary:** Rybarski appreciated understanding for missing the last meeting.
- **Member:** Klein discussed the court case in Ann Arbor against the gravel mine industry.

Staff Reports:

- **Executive Director's Report:** Hickmott thanked the Board and Sinclair for the opportunity to be a part of the Great Lakes Leadership Academy, of which she graduated last week. Hickmott reported that the Resource Recovery Agreement with Van Buren County has been executed for FY 24.
- **Administrator's Report:** Sinclair shared she attended Hickmott's GLLA graduation at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute and appreciated the Board's support for this training. Sinclair expressed eagerness for FY 24 and additional fund development opportunities.
- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Report:** written.
- **Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) Report:** Sinclair noted that Hyrdilla was found in Berrien County, and the CISMA team provided a written report.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Report:** written.



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- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)/Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Assistance (TA) Report:** Hartman shared that the Van Buren NRCS office had a record year for EQIP participation and funding and provided a written report .
- **NRCS Conservation Technician Report:** written.
- **Outreach Report:** written.
- **Produce Safety Report:** none.
- **Resource Recovery Report:** written.

Cooperating Agency Reports:

- **Farm Service Agency (FSA) Report:** None.
- **Land Preservation Board Report:** None.
- **Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) Report:** written.
- **Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Report:** email forwarded.
- **NRCS:** None.
- **VBCD Foundation:** None.

Other Correspondence: None.

Next Board Meeting: November 8, 2023 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079

Adjournment: Motion by Klein, 2nd by Petersen to adjourn the meeting at 12:12 PM. Motion carried.

APPROVED:

Signature

Date