



Van Buren Conservation District

Minutes of November 8, 2023 Regular Board Meeting

Minutes Prepared by: Lia Will, Administrative Associate and Emily Hickmott,
Executive Director

VanTassel called the regular Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) November 8, 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 – absent
- Member, Ron Klein – present

Others Present:

- Emily Hickmott, Executive Director
- Kim Sinclair, Financial Administrator
- Jacob Diljak, Outreach Associate
- Lia Will, Administrative Associate

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Rybarski Klein to approve the November 8, 2023 regular board meeting agenda. Motion carried.

Minutes: Klein appreciates the better contrast of draft watermark for readability. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Druskovich to accept the October 25, 2023 regular board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comment: None.

Treasurer's Report:

- Financial statements for October 2023 were presented and discussed. Motion by Petersen, 2nd by Klein to approve the October 2023 financial statements as presented. Motion carried.
- The bills of November 2023 were presented and discussed. Motion by Druskovich, 2nd by Vantassel to approve the payment of November bills as presented. Motion carried.
- Payroll and Paid Time Off Accumulation Report for October 2023 was presented. Motion by Klein, 2nd by Petersen to approve payment of payroll for October 2023 as presented. Motion carried.

Old Business:

- **VBCD Foundation:** None
- **FY 23 Audit:** Date not set as of yet.

New Business:

- **Grants Received:**
 - **Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) | Operating Grant Program | \$40,000.00 awarded | \$0 match | 1 October 2023 start date**
Waiting on signatures from MDARD. Motion by Druskovich to accept the MDARD Operating grant funds, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.



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- **MDARD | Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Technical Assistance | \$78,500.00 | \$0 | 1 October 2023 start date:** Motion by Petersen to accept the MDARD MAEAP Technical Assistance grant funds, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
- **Grant Applications Submitted:**
 - **Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy (EGLE) 2024 Scrap Tire Grant | Southwest Michigan Regional Application for Collection Days and Year-round Site Collection | \$148,500.00 proposed budget | \$0 match:** The grant will aid in establishing collection events and year-round tire recycling in Van Buren County. Motion by Druskovich to accept the Scrap Tire Grant if awarded, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
 - **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) | Climate-smart Commodities (CSC) Project Concept Paper | \$1,070,000.00 proposed budget | \$395,000.00 match | expected decision date: December 2023:** First grant stage for building healthy soils through prescribed grazing and the development of a grazing school. Feedback expected December 2023 to determine if a full application is requested.
 - **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Forest Service | Connecting Lake Associations With Their Upstream Watersheds in Southwest Michigan | \$300,000.00 proposed budget | \$0 match | expected decision date March 2024:** The grant will connect lake associations with their upstream watersheds and educate on land management practices for water quality. Motion by Druskovich to accept the Great Lake Restoration Initiative Forest Service grant if awarded, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
 - **GLRI Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA) 2023 | Consistent and Effective Invasive Plant Control Throughout the Jones Conservation Corridor | \$100,596.00 proposed budget | \$9,450.00 match | expected decision date April 2024:** Grant for additional CISMA staffing for continuous invasive plant management in the Jones Conservation Corridor. Motion by Druskovich to accept the GLRI Cooperative Weed Management grant funds if awarded, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
 - **Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) 2023 | Core Funding and Survey Treatment & Objectives | \$100,000.00 proposed budget | \$0 match | expected decision date April 2024:** Grant renewal core funding for CISMA staff. Motion by Klein to accept the MISGP Core Funding and Survey Grant Program grant funds if awarded, 2nd by Petersen. Motion carried.
 - **MISGP Priority Project Funding | Early Detection & Rapid Response (EDRR) for Hydrilla and Other Watchlist Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in Southwest Michigan | \$246,000.00 proposed budget | 0 match | expected decision date April 2024:** Grant to fund one full time staff for detection of Hydrilla in Southwest Michigan. Motion by Druskovich to accept the MISGP Priority Project Funding grant funds if awarded, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.



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- **MDARD 2023 Rural Readiness Grant with West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum (WMSBF) | \$60,000.00 proposed budget | \$10,000.00 in funds for VBCD | 0 match | expected decision date unknown:** Partnership with the WMSBF to promote sustainability and climate solutions in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties. Motion by Druskovich to accept the MDARD 2023 Rural Readiness Grant funds if awarded, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.

Committee Updates:

- **Fund Development**
 - Next Meeting: To be determined
- **Property Development**
 - Site Plan and Concept Plan Discussion: Comments are due November 22, 2023.
 - Next Meeting: To be determined

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

Board of Director Reports

- **Chairperson:** Alma Township and DNR land swap still in process.
- **Vice Chairperson:** Proud of all the grant applications reviewed.
- **Treasurer:** Proud of the team and excited for the future.
- **Secretary:** None
- **Member:** Will submit data for climate grant.

Staff Reports:

- **Executive Director's Report:** Jena Johnson will transition to part-time CISMA staff starting next week. Thank you to the Board for their review of the grant applications.
- **Administrator's Report:** Requested for the budget to be reviewed quarterly for amendments that may need to be made.
- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Report:** written.
- **Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) Report:** written.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Report:** written.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)/Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Assistance (TA) Report:** written.
- **NRCS Conservation Technician Report:** written.
- **Outreach Report:** written and Diljak presented the 2024 VBCD Calendar and 80th anniversary logo. Shared that trees are ordered and seed packets from Native Connections will be made available to sell at the tree sale.
- **Produce Safety Report:** none.
- **Resource Recovery Report:** written.



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Cooperating Agency Reports:

- **Farm Service Agency (FSA) Report:** None.
- **Land Preservation Board Report:** None. Next meeting is 8 November 2023 at 6:00 PM.
- **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: December 13, 2023 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079

Adjournment: Motion by Druskovich to adjourn the meeting at 11:38 AM, 2nd by VanTassel. Motion carried.

APPROVED:

Signature

Date