



Van Buren Conservation District

Minutes of March 27, 2024 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

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

Van Tassel called the regular Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) March 27, 2024 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
- Lia Will, Administrative Associate
- Alex Florian, CISMA Coordinator
- Dan Williamson, Executive Director Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum

Approval of Agenda: Add "4. Hartford Relocation" under "New Business," add under "Other Correspondence" "EGLE Public Notice Announcement HPW-7M08-CJASG," "Mason Lake Conservation District Board of Director's Letter," and "Adult Use Marijuana Payments February 2024." Move "1. Mini-grant application: Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Memorial fund, Inc." to before the "Treasurer's Report." Motion by Petersen to approve the March 27, 2024 regular board meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Druskovich. Motion carried.

Minutes: Motion by Rybarski to approve the February 28, 2024 regular board meeting minutes as presented, 2nd by VanTassel. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Dan Williamson, Executive Director of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum, introduced himself and shared information on the museum. Mr. Williamson thanked the board for their continuing partnership, support, and allowing time to present the mini grant application for a youth education area at the museum.

1. **Mini-grant Application: Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Memorial Fund, Inc.**

The mini grant application is requesting funds to add a youth education area which will include a sensory garden walkway, a native plant garden, and a hoop house. The project will be completed with the addition of in-kind donations and volunteer labor. Motion by Druskovich to approve the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum mini grant application for \$5,000.00, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report:

- February 2024 Financial Statements: The county millage check of \$268,821.23 was received. Motion by Klein to approve the February 2024 Financial Statements as presented, 2nd by Rybarski. Motion carried.

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- **Payment of Bills for March 2024:** A copy of the Fisher Insurance invoice was included for the Board's review. Sinclair informed the Board that the transition to ADP payroll service went smoothly. The new service will cost approximately \$70.00 per month instead of the \$150.00 QuickBooks payroll processing fee. The new service complies with audit expectations. Motion by Petersen to approve the March 2024 bills as presented, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
- Payroll and Paid Time Off Accumulation Report for February 2024: Motion by Rybarski to approve the Payroll and Paid Time Off for February 2024 as presented, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.

Old Business:

- **VBCD Foundation:** A meeting date of April 17 or April 24 are being considered to review the new by-laws of the VBCD Foundation.
- **VBCD 2024 Annual Meeting Location & Program:** Suggestions from the staff for awards at the annual meeting include Farmer of the Year – Mary Ellis (Blueberries), Conservationist of the Year – Steve Bare, and tentative new categories of Lifetime Achievement – Bruce McKeller and Friend of the Conservation District – George McManus.
- **Tree Sale 2024:** Tree sales are up this year with 90% of the ordering done online. The cutoff for ordering is March 31. The working schedule for the tree sale was staggered this year to help reduce accrual of comp time. A petting zoo will be located at the Paw Paw Offices on Saturday, April 13.
- **Vehicle Need:** With the increased workload for CISMA Team, an additional truck will be necessary. Paperwork for the financing of one ½ ton truck is in process. Motion by Rybarski to approve the purchase and financing of the truck not to exceed \$60,000.00 through First State Bank, to be executed by Treasurer Carl Druskovich, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
- **Envirothon Team Sponsorship:** The regional competition was well attended but the ISD was unable to form a team this year so no VBCD funds were used to sponsor a team.
- **Grant Applications Submitted:**
 - **Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) 2023 | Core Funding and Survey Treatment & Objectives** | \$110,000.00 proposed budget | \$93,000.00 awarded | \$0 match | expected start date: 1 April 2024
Reductions will be in personnel, supplies, and printing.
 - **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 | \$190,500.00 awarded | \$0 match | expected start date: 1 April 2024
The two year grant will require hiring two part time seasonal CISMA employees with interviews scheduled next month.

New Business:

1. **Mini-grant Application: Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum Memorial Fund, Inc.**
Moved to after Public Comment

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2. Grant Applications Submitted:

a. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation | Conservation Partners Program (CPP) | \$373,188.74 proposed budget | \$0 proposed match | expected decision date: unknown

The goals of the grant are to establish farmer peer groups to address and adopt soil health management practices in prioritized watersheds. The program is in existence in Illinois and Wisconsin. Discussion will continue.

b. Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Michigan Water Corps (MiCorps) | Paw Paw River Cleanup | \$2,915.21 proposed budget | \$1,206.90 proposed in-kind match | expected decision date: 31 May 2024: The successful river clean up last year will continue this year further downstream in the Lawrence/Hartford sections of the Paw Paw River. The project is led by the Outreach Coordinator. Motion by Druskovich to approve the submittal of the Paw Paw River clean up grant, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.

c. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) | Climate Smart Commodities - Climate-Smart Grazing: Empowering Farmers through Sustainable Practices and Scientific Insights for Enhanced Soil Carbon Sequestration and Reduced GreenHouse Gas Emissions | \$2,335,490.00 proposed budget | \$704,129.00 proposed match | expected decision date: 1 July 2024: The grant will form a partnership to support NRCS approved Climate Smart Practices for prescribed grazing through monitoring and education. Discussion will continue.

3. Administrator Job Description: The revised Administrator Job Description was presented with changes to flexible time and adjustment of duties. Motion by Klein to approve the new Administrator Job Description, 2nd by Druskovich. Motion carried.

4. Hartford Relocation: Discussion resulted in no changes at this time.

Committee Updates:

- **Fund Development (Petersen, Rybarski, Sinclair)**
 - Next Meeting: To be determined
- **Property Development (Druskovich, VanTassel)**
 - Next Meeting: To be determined

Board of Director Reports

- **Chairperson:** Resigned from the Almena Township Supervisor position.
- **Vice Chairperson:** Enjoyed attending Farming for the Future. Would like to see a somewhat smaller event.
- **Treasurer:** Will not be running for Hamilton Township Supervisor again to focus more time with the VBCD.
- **Secretary:** Farming for the Future was wonderful and the amount of women attendees was impressive.
- **Member:** Assisting Arlington Township on updating ordinances to include environmental protections.

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Van Buren District Staff Reports:

- **Executive Director's Report:** April 25, 2024 is the actual day of VBCD's 80th anniversary, and the Outreach Coordinator will be contacting board members for information to post in "Meet the VBCD Board Members" social media posts.
- **Administrator's Report:** Thanked the Board for the flexible time adjustment.
- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Report:** written.
- **CISMA Report:** Florian reported landowners are reaching out for treatment of hydrilla already and provided a written report.
- **MAEAP Report:** written.
- **NACD Outreach & Technical Assistance 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:** written.
- **MSUE Report:** email forwarded.
- **NRCS:** None.
- **VBCD Foundation:** None.

Other Correspondence:

- **Van Buren Youth Fair Ag Olympics:** Support for the Ag Olympics of \$100.00. Motion by Druskovich to approve the \$100.00 in support of the Van Buren Youth Fair AG Olympics, 2nd by Klein. Motion carried.
- **EGLE Public Notice Announcement: HPZ-T9EA-3G9VS (80-39532 Wilderness Dunes Lane-Covert)** No discussion.
- **Mason Lake Conservation District Board of Directors Letter:** The resolution from the Mason-Lake Conservation District to the State of Michigan with concerns of the proposed reduced funding of the MAEAP program and requesting support to keep the MAEAP program in our local communities and Conservation Districts. A similar resolution from the VBCD will be drafted and presented at the April board meeting.
- **Adult Use Marihuana Payments February 2024:** Shared information from the County Commissioner.

Next Board Meeting: April 24, 2024 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079

Adjournment: Motion by Druskovich to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 PM, 2nd by VanTassel. Motion carried.



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APPROVED:

Signature

Date

DRAFT