

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION FUND BOARD

Location:
Farm Bureau Corporate Office
7373 W. Saginaw Highway, Lansing, Michigan
Board Room 2nd Floor

Thursday, August 1, 2019
1:30 PM – 3:35 PM

MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Carl Bednarski (Chairman)
Brian Bourdages
Ken DeCock (Phone)
Peg Kohring
Gary McDowell
Stephen Shine

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jonathan Jarosz

STAFF PRESENT

Rich Harlow
Elizabeth Brost (Juras)
Lindsay Woods

GUESTS PRESENT

Becky Huttenga (Ottawa county)
Brian Thomas (Natural Resources Conservation Service)
Larry Neil (Barry county)
Paul Wing (Barry County)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bednarski called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- **Motion:** Member Kohring moved to approve the April 17, 2019 meeting minutes, motion supported. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Coordinator, Brian Thomas, presented to the group with information based on the 2014 Farm Bill. Brian answered questions from the group.

BOARD BRIEFING AND ACTION ITEMS

Appropriation Update & Press Release Needed

Rich Harlow announced the appropriation is still pending and will likely be on hold until October 1, 2019. At that time, a press release will be needed.

Proposed Changes to Scoring System

The Staff met with four local government representatives in May 2019 and had a fruitful discussion about updates to the scoring system. The Members received the proposed updates via email prior to this meeting for review. Rich Harlow read all proposed updates and provided explanation for the updates.

The Members recommended two changes:

1. Item #5 should include the term “active agricultural land” and farmed Qualified Ag & PRE lands should be added.
2. Item #7 should include the term “property” instead of “parcel”.

- **Motion:** Member Kohring moved to approve all proposed scoring system updates with the exception to items #5 & #7, motion supported; Members voted. Motion carried.

Proposed Changes to Conflict of Interest Clause

The group discussed the proposed changes based on previous discussions, drafted by Rich Harlow, to the Conflict of Interest clause. Member DeCock expressed his concerns about local farmers who serve on local government boards who would be excluded from being considered for a grant. Brian Thomas (NRCS) offered to provide documentation about board members not eligible for grants even if they recuse themselves. Paul Wing asked if the applicant could be any part of the scoring process; Chairman Bednarski replied no.

- **Motion:** Member DeCock moved to adopt proposed language for the conflict of interest clause; motion supported; Members voted. Motion carried.

Funding options for appraisals and title work

The group discussed whether the Fund should assist with the cost of appraisals and title work. Guests present stated Eaton and Barry county programs do not have money set aside for these costs. Member Kohring stated if the Fund doesn't pay for the full costs at least some support is good and that it would only take a few acres out of consideration. Member DeCock stated the Fund should not pay for these costs, the local programs should pay. Member Bourdages stated he considers this a modest incentive to help local programs get off the ground.

- **Motion:** Member Bourdages moved to provide appraisal and title work costs for three initial conservation easements; Members voted. Motioned carried.

PRESENTATION

Ottawa County Planning & Performance, Economic Development Coordinator, Becky Huttenga, presented Ottawa county farmland preservation survey results to the group. Becky answered questions from the group.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments.

Member McDowell expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Rich Harlow's years of dedication and service.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will revise items in scoring system.

Staff will draft press release.

Staff will schedule next meeting for October 1st or around that time.

ADJOURN

- **Motion:** Member Kohring moved to adjourn at 3:35pm; motion supported; Members voted. Motion carried.