

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Meeting Held via Remote Technology

MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2021

PRESENT:

Dru Montri, Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Charlie Meintz, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Tim Boring, Secretary, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Patricia Bergdahl, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Gary McDowell, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Montri called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:00 a.m. on March 10, 2021, noting March is Food and Agriculture Month, celebrating the diversity of products grown and processed in Michigan. Today's meeting is being conducted electronically to protect the health of Commission members, staff, and the public due to the Coronavirus by limiting the number of people at public gatherings. She advised the Governor's appointment of Cheryl Kobernik to the Commission was rejected by the Senate, which was one of many rejections by the Senate in a display of disapproval of the Governor's COVID-19 response.

Commissioner Boring called the roll with the following Commissioners present: Commissioner Bergdahl in Skandia, Michigan; Commissioner Boring in Stockbridge, Michigan; Commissioner Meintz in Stephenson, Michigan; and Commissioner Montri in Bath, Michigan. Director McDowell, in Rudyard, Michigan, was also present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEINTZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR MARCH 10, 2021. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BORING. MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 20, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEINTZ MOVED TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 20, 2021, MEETING MINUTES, WITH CORRECTION TO THE SPELLING OF SKANDIA. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BERGD AHL. MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is May 12, 2021. Commissioner Meintz recommended the meeting be held in person if possible. Commissioner Montri advised that suggestion would be considered.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners shared information relative to their farm operations and agriculture in their respective areas, as well as industry meetings in which they participated. They expressed concerns relative to milk pricing, rise in grain prices, and uncertainty around agriculture and the carbon market. Even so, it was noted it should be a good year for Michigan agriculture.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director McDowell introduced Joseph Rivet, new Deputy Director for the department. Deputy Director Rivet advised he is looking forward to continuing to work with the department's extraordinary team.

The Director shared details relative to the Office of Rural Development, the Ag Housing Task Force Report, Council on Climate Solutions, Migrant and H2A Vaccinations, and an update on return to work for State of Michigan employees.

He announced the Biennial Review of Commission Policies will begin this summer, with presentation for approval targeted for the September Commission meeting.

Discussion ensued relative to conducting the May Commission meeting. The Director advised currently outdoor meetings are limited to 25 people and the Legislature is considering various changes to the Open Meetings Act which will drive decisions for meetings going forward.

In response to question from Commissioner Montri relative to the Council on Climate Solutions, the Director advised he will be reporting to the various stakeholder groups, all workgroups are open to the public, and all proceedings will be posted on the Council's website.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)

There was no public comment relative to agenda items.

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE: Jeanne Hausler, Food and Dairy Communications Specialist

Ms. Hausler reported the Michigan Agriculture Magazine is published annually in March as part of Michigan Food and Agriculture Month. She shared details around the development and content of the 2021 edition, noting it shares many success stories and highlights the perseverance of food and agriculture in Michigan.

She reviewed various ways the publication is being distributed, including the electronic version available at www.farmflavor.com/michigan-agriculture. Commissioners received copies for sharing, and advised if they would like more, to please advise Ms. Ayers.

Commissioner Meintz emphasized this year's issue was well illustrated and contains even more excitement for Michigan agriculture.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MDARD)
GOALS AND OUTCOMES: Kevin Bambenek, Business Performance Specialist

Mr. Bambenek advised he manages the performance management initiatives MDARD deploys throughout the organization. He outlined the various components of the department's performance management framework and specifics around the monthly development of MDARD's Scorecard Performance Summary of outcome measures which support the department's key goals. Results are published and utilized to identify opportunities for improvement.

He highlighted one metric of which the department is very proud and used it as an example of how outcome measures are managed. The Employee Survey Champions metric was 72 percent for MDARD, which represents employees with a high level of engagement and high likelihood of staying within the department. The department saw a 93 percent response rate, which is significantly higher than the average State of Michigan agency for the third year in a row.

In response to questions from Commissioner Montri, Mr. Bambenek advised the Employee Survey does provide personal demographic data to a level that still ensures anonymity. As such, he is involved with the MDARD Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup. Relative to the outcomes and measures, the fundamental maps are utilized to prioritize which metrics will be included on the scorecard.

MDARD DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) STRATEGIC PLAN: Kenneth McFarlane, Chief Deputy Director, Ashley Batteen, Recruitment and Professional Development Specialist, and Johnathon Schweda, Departmental Technician

Chief Deputy Director McFarlane introduced DEI Taskforce facilitators Ashley Batteen and Johnathon Schweda, recognizing their exceptional efforts over the last 18 months in developing the department's DEI Strategic Plan.

Ms. Batteen and Mr. Schweda shared highlights around development of MDARD's three-year DEI Strategic Plan, which focuses on the key goals of recruitment and retention, training and outreach, and internal/external stakeholder interactions. A strong management team supports commitment to the initiative in creating a deep DEI culture within MDARD. The DEI Taskforce and four dedicated Expert Area Teams will be driving collaboration and activities of the plan as it moves forward. In addition, Monthly Think Tank sessions will offer opportunities for all staff to provide additional input and ideas for the DEI effort going forward.

Ms. Batteen announced Commissioners will have an opportunity to complete the Implicit Bias Training through a special State of Michigan portal, which will become available within the next two months.

Director McDowell noted he is extremely proud of all MDARD staff, noting Ashley and Johnathon are two prime examples through what they have been able to accomplish with the DEI effort.

In response to questions from Commissioner Montri, Chief Deputy Director McFarlane advised Ms. Batteen, in her role as MDARD's Equity and Inclusion Officer, addresses the larger programmatic issues to ensure the department engages the industry to

confirm we are using the DEI lens wherever possible. An initial opportunity for external engagement will be through recruitment efforts with other state agencies and the industry, as well as external ambassador opportunities being developed. MDARD will be integrating Employee Engagement results into accomplishing key goals for the DEI initiative. Measurement of DEI within the department's scorecard falls within the goal of efficient and effective government.

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS UPDATE: Nora Wineland, State Veterinarian and Director, Animal Industry Division

Dr. Wineland reviewed the current Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) split-state status for Michigan, as well as a brief history that included the various milestones accomplished within the program. She discussed details around the 2020 Bovine TB-positive cattle cases and deer surveillance numbers. Pursuant to the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), three positive herds within the Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ) are allowed in a 12-month period. The current MOU expires in December 2021 and will need to be renewed this year. Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) deer surveillance during 2020 and after-action items were also reviewed.

A federal review team visited Michigan the week of August 24, 2020, overall results of which were positive, confirming MDARD is meeting the intent of its MOU with USDA. Details of USDA's three recommendations were discussed. She also provided a research update, including objectives of the Bovine TB Eradication Collaborative Adaptive Management Program.

In response to questions from Commissioner Meintz, Dr. Wineland advised owners of Herd #79 chose to shift their operation from being a dairy herd to a beef herd. MDNR is currently conducting a postcard survey to gather statistics that will help determine if collection numbers were lower simply because of less deer being harvested, or if COVID-19 was a key factor. The department will discuss with MDNR and USDA effects of the pandemic, as well as improvements in various approaches to deer surveillance and deer head collection as part of the MOU renewal discussions with USDA.

RECESS AND RECONVENE

Chairperson Montri recessed the meeting at 10:40 a.m. for a brief break. She reconvened the meeting at 10:47 a.m.

WATER USE ADVISORY COUNCIL: Laura Campbell, Council Co-Chair and Manager, Agricultural Ecology Department, Michigan Farm Bureau

Ms. Campbell provided background on how water is regulated in Michigan, noting the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact protects the Great Lakes Basin, which represents 20 percent of the world's surface fresh water. Details around the Water Withdrawal Assessment Program and formation of the Water Use Advisory Council were reviewed. Copies of the Council's 2020 report were shared with the Commission, as well as the website link. Reports will be issued every two years with recommendations for program improvements.

Details around the Council's recommendations relative to conservation, data collection, and modeling were discussed, along with other recommendations outlined in the report.

Next steps include support of the budgetary requests, stakeholder outreach, monitoring process on current recommendations, and work on new priorities and recommendations to improve the program.

In response to questions by Commissioners Montri and Meintz, Ms. Campbell will research and forward to Ms. Ayers information relative to water use by each sector, including how much water is used by bottling companies for sharing with the Commissioners. She emphasized that regardless of the water use, everyone follows the same regulatory program in Michigan.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND REQUEST: Jamie Zmitko-Somers, Division Director, Agriculture Development Division

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised one project is presented for Commission approval today, which is Shamco Lumber, who is expanding and modernizing their facility. She introduced Shamco Lumber officials Jon Richter, President, and Scott Shamion, Treasurer. Mr. Shamion provided a history of the company and details of their extensive expansion project, as well as the positive effects it will have on the Upper Peninsula lumber industry. The total project investment is over \$1.9 million.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised MDARD staff recommend the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development approve a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance-based grant of \$50,000 for Shamco Lumber, Inc.

Discussion ensued regarding expected project outcomes, which will create a positive, sustainable impact. In response to question from Commissioner Meintz, Mr. Shamion confirmed their new equipment includes state-of-the-art computer guidance and electric eye scans for precision cutting.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND PERFORMANCE-BASED GRANT OF \$50,000 FOR THE SHAMCO LUMBER, INC., PROJECT AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MEINTZ. MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for Shamco Lumber's investment in Michigan's agriculture industry.

BUDGET UPDATE: Sylvia Renteria, Director of Finance and Budget

Ms. Renteria discussed details of the Fiscal Year 2022 recommended budget for the department, which includes \$13.6 million in federal dollars, \$57.9 million in general funds, and \$44.8 million in restricted dollars, for a total of \$116.3 million. Breakdown by program area was reviewed, as well as the single general fund reduction of \$1.3 million.

She reviewed investment requests for expanded testing, information technology, and rural communities included in the budget. Implications of the Water Quality Protection fee sunset and details around an additional supplemental request focusing on migrant labor housing were also reviewed.

In response to question from Commissioner Montri, Ms. Renteria advised the Office of Rural Development position is included in the line item for the Agriculture Development Division. That individual would report at an executive level, and this is an excellent method of initiating the concept for furthering rural communities.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Nathan Kark, Director of Policy Development and Legislative Affairs

Commissioner Montri congratulated Mr. Kark on his new business opportunity, noting this will be his last update as Legislative Liaison for the department. Mr. Kark advised it has been a huge honor and he has truly enjoyed working with the Commission.

Mr. Kark advised the new Legislative session has begun and referred to the MDARD Legislative Update provided to the Commissioners, which includes legislation for which the department is responsible. He reviewed activities and status around bills of interest to the department. Also discussed were activities with the Legislature around the department's budget.

In response to question from Commissioner Meintz, Mr. Kark advised the department is working with Senator Outman on his bill to ensure awareness of any spray operations that might affect beekeepers. Although mechanisms currently exist, the Senator is proposing more proactive measures. Various concerns are currently being discussed. Commissioner Montri advised her understanding is the bill is focused on state-administered aerial spraying related to EEE, with notification to beekeepers in advance.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation for all of Mr. Kark's work while with MDARD and wished him well in his future endeavors.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment on non-agenda items was requested.

ADJOURN

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEINTZ MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes January 20, 2021*
- C) *Director's Update March 10, 2021*
- D) *MDARD Performance Excellence Graphic*
- E) *MDARD January 2021 Scorecard*
- F) *MDARD DEI Taskforce Update Presentation*
- G) *MDARD DEI Strategic Plan 2021-2023*
- H) *MDARD TB Update Presentation*
- I) *Michigan Water Use Advisory Council: 2020 Recommendations Presentation*
- J) *Michigan Water Use Advisory Council 2020 Report*
- K) *MDARD Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Presentation*
- L) *Legislative Status – March 1, 2021*