

## **SPECIAL MEETING**

### **MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AgroLiquid  
3055 West M-21  
St. Johns, MI 48879**

**and**

**Remote Technology via Microsoft Teams  
Dial: 1-248-509-0316, Conference ID 909 052 171#**

### **MEETING MINUTES February 7, 2022**

#### **PRESENT:**

Charlie Meintz, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Patricia Bergdahl, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Andy Chae, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Juliette King-McAvoy, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Monica Wyant, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Gary McDowell, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

#### **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Vice Chairperson Meintz called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 10:05 a.m. on February 7, 2022. Commissioner Meintz called the roll with Commissioners Bergdahl, Chae, King-McAvoy, Meintz, and Wyant, and Director McDowell present.

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 7, 2022. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL. MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 10, 2021, MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 10, 2021, MEETING MINUTES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL. MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting is March 16, 2022, to be held at AgroLiquid in St. Johns.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL**

Commissioners each briefly shared details around their background, information relative to their farm operations, and agriculture in their respective areas. Concerns were expressed on the challenges currently facing the agriculture industry, including issues

around prices and inflation, transportation, crop failures, seasonal worker housing, and the ability to secure fertilizer products.

Commissioners Bergdahl, Chae, King-McAvoy, Meintz, and Wyant traveled to attend today's meeting. There was no other travel submitted for approval.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KING-McAVOY. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **COMMISSIONER ISSUES**

Commissioner Meintz advised the Commission is needing to fill its positions of Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair for 2022.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER MEINTZ AS CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2022. COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEINTZ MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER CHAE AS VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2022. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL AS SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2022. COMMISSIONER MEINTZ SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

Commissioner Meintz reviewed retirement resolutions before the Commission recognizing Carla McCarrick and Tom Young. Mr. Young expressed his appreciation, adding he has thoroughly enjoyed his time with the department.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED THE RESOLUTIONS FOR CARLA McCARRICK AND TOM YOUNG BE ADOPTED WITH BEST WISHES FOR THEIR LONG AND HEALTHY RETIREMENT. COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director McDowell shared details of his recent food and agriculture business tours, in which local legislators and the media also participated. Agriculture tours will continue monthly throughout 2022. He also participated in the Michigan Agri-Business Winter Conference, and will be in Washington, D.C., next week for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Winter Policy Conference.

The Director shared details around the upcoming Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Sampling Team Exercises, the newly created Office of Rural Development, the Farm Innovation Grant Program, the one-year anniversary of MDARD's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) effort, and the department's plans for return to office and remote work.

He also reviewed 2022 priorities for the department, which are focused on MDARD doing its part to move the needle for the agriculture industry and keep the momentum going for future generations.

In response to question from Commissioner King-McAvoy, the Director advised MDARD's DEI efforts have been expanded externally to the Soil Conservation Districts and plans of offering opportunities to other stakeholder groups will be pursued in the future.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Wyant, the Director advised Governor Whitmer's roundtable discussion on the new Office of Rural Development brought considerable excitement and enthusiasm. This represents a concerted effort to focus solely on rural development and ensure rural areas share in the prosperity going forward with Michigan's new economy.

Commissioner Meintz complimented the Director on the recent Michigan Farm Bureau news article, noting it was very representative of MDARD. The Director noted the department is taking a hard look at the many challenges currently affecting the agriculture industry. To assist in that effort, he and Chief Deputy Director McFarlane have been reaching out to commodity group leaders to gain a more complete awareness of the challenges and issues their segment of the industry is facing.

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

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised four Food and Agriculture Investment Program project requests are being presented for Commission consideration today, noting the projects are not able to move forward until they have been reviewed by the Commission.

The first project is Fry Krisp Food Products, which is a family-owned business located in Jackson, Michigan, since 1950. Due to change in the meeting date, they are unable to join us today. The company is under new ownership and is aggressively seeking new markets to be supported by expansion efforts for increased efficiency and production capabilities. She reviewed details around their \$3,041,125 expansion project, its positive impacts for Michigan agriculture, renewable energy efforts, and unique employment opportunities.

MDARD is recommending a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance based grant of \$75,000 for Fry Krisp.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND PERFORMANCE BASED GRANT OF \$75,000 FOR FRY KRISP FOOD PRODUCTS. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised the next request is Cooperative Elevator Company, which is a farmer-owned cooperative established in 1915 currently supplying 1,110 member-owners across Michigan. They are investing in several high-capacity processing and wash lines to triple production capacity of processed and washed edible dry beans at the Pigeon facility.

Chuck Squires, Risk and Government Relations Manager for Cooperative Elevator Company provided additional background on the company. He shared details around this \$8,000,000 project, its positive impacts for their members and the agriculture industry, and improvements for their company and its employees. Additionally, he mentioned the Commissioners are welcome to tour their facility should they be traveling in the Thumb area of the state.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised MDARD is recommending a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance based grant of \$90,000 for Cooperative Elevator.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND PERFORMANCE BASED GRANT OF \$90,000 FOR COOPERATIVE ELEVATOR COMPANY. COMMISSIONER KING-McAVOY SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised the third project presented today is Marrow Detroit Provisions (MDP), Detroit's only hybrid butcher shop and restaurant focused on whole-animal butchery. MDP is focused on an expansionary project to become a USDA-certified meat processor specializing in value-added meat products for sale to wholesalers, food service accounts, and retail customers. Their training program and employment goals will prioritize equality and diversity, and support for overlooked segments of the workforce.

Ping Ho, CEO/Co-Founder for Marrow Detroit Provisions reviewed details of their \$3,373,000 project, noting it will be housed in Detroit's Eastern Market and will create a "Partner Farm Strategy," that will continually evolve. MDP aims to succeed in sustainable production using processes that are non-polluting, energy conserving, and safe and healthful for workers.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised MDARD is recommending a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance based grant of \$80,000 for Marrow Detroit Provisions.

Commissioner Chae advised he supports Marrow's project. However, because of his business relationships with Ms. Ho and Marrow Detroit Provisions, he recused himself from voting on the project.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND PERFORMANCE BASED GRANT OF \$80,000 FOR MARROW DETROIT PROVISIONS. COMMISSIONER KING-McAVOY SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised the final project presented today is Youngblood Vineyard, which is a family-owned fifth generation farm that is now home to 23,000 cold-hardy wine grape vines planted on 25 acres. The proposed project will expand the processing facility and add an indoor event space. Of special note, they are part of Michigan State University's "Vets to Ag" program, offering hands-on training and education to military veterans who have experienced multiple barriers to employment.

Jessica Youngblood, Co-Owner/Operator for Youngblood Vineyard, shared details on their background and the \$1,257,000 project. As the only commercial vineyard in Metro Detroit, they have the monumental opportunity to offer custom crush to local wineries who do not grow grapes or make their own wine. The farm is Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verified in both Cropping and Farmstead systems. The event space will allow them to continue providing workshops, seminars, and conferences for the community and new grape growers/winemakers/wineries.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers advised MDARD is recommending a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance based grant of \$55,000 for Youngblood Vineyard.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND PERFORMANCE BASED GRANT OF \$55,000 FOR YOUNGBLOOD VINEYARD. COMMISSIONER CHAE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

**BUDGET UPDATE: Sylvia Renteria, Director of Finance and Budget**

Ms. Renteria noted the Finance and Budget Unit recently welcomed two new staff members who replaced retired and transferred employees. They Buyer Brandon Colby and Federal Coordinator Clara Borieo.

She shared details around the enacted Supplemental, PA 133 of 2021, which was signed in December. It provides appropriation for the Horse Racing Advisory Commission.

The department continues to work with the State Budget Office to finalize the Fiscal Year 2023 budget. The Governor's budget recommendation will be released this Wednesday and the legislative budget process will continue through spring. The Revenue Estimating Conference will occur in May, with larger budget discussions following. As the department is informed, the Commission will be apprised.

In response to question from Commissioner Meintz, Ms. Renteria advised MDARD anticipates the new budget will bring positive opportunities to move the agriculture industry forward.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Ashley Steffen, Director of Policy Development and Legislative Affairs**

Ms. Steffen referred to the MDARD Legislative Update provided to the Commissioners and reviewed status and activity around bills of interest to the department. She noted the MAEAP legislation was recently signed into law and Executive Directive 2022-1 created the Office of Rural Development.

Details were reviewed around various bills that have been moving, including 5588-89 relative to dog tattoos and Certificate of Free Sale legislation, both initiated by the department. Other bills of interest to MDARD in the Legislature include updates to the Cottage Food Law, a bill proposing reciprocity for aerial pesticide sprayers with other states, and the consumable hemp bills that would amend the Food Law.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was requested.

## **ADJOURN**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.  
COMMISSIONER BERGDAHL SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

### Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes November 10, 2021*
- C) *Retirement Resolutions for Carla McCarrick and Thomas Young*
- D) *Director February 7, 2022 – Issues of Interest Report*
- E) *Food and Agriculture Investment Program Project Briefing Memos:*
  - a. *Cooperative Elevator Company*
  - b. *Fry Krisp Food Products, Inc.*
  - c. *Youngblood Vineyard*
  - d. *Marrow Detroit Provisions*
- F) *MDARD Budget Update Presentation – February 7, 2021*
- G) *MDARD Summary of 2021-2022 Michigan Legislature – Jan. 27, 2021*