MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Constitution Hall – Atrium Level
Lee Walker Conference Room
525 West Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan

Option to Join via Remote Technology
Dial: 1-248-509-0316; Conf. ID: 706 355 858#

Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2025

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Garthe called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:30 a.m. on May 21, 2025. Chair Garthe called the roll with the following Commissioners present:

PRESENT:
Kathrine Garthe, Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
David Williams, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Monica Wyant, Secretary, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dr. Tim Boring, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

ABSENT/EXCUSED:
Andy Chae, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development. (arrived 9:44 a.m.)
Dr. Felicia Wu, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 21, 2025, AGENDA. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 12, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 12, 2025, MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Chair Garthe announced the next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, July 23, 2025, in Deborah A. Stabenow Building.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Commissioner Wyant expressed excitement that spring and early summer produce was being placed on shelves across the state of Michigan.

Commissioner Williams recently traveled to India with the Michigan Soybean Committee, where they met with Soy Excellent Center and India's need for exporting soybeans from Michigan into India.

Commissioner Garthe's farm is currently in blossom. The cold, wet weather is a concern, due to fungus, but they are spraying to mitigate the concern. Overall, their apple, cherry and pear crop looks good.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL TO TODAY'S MEETING. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Chair Garthe highlighted the 22-year career of Tina Campbell, who retired earlier in the month. Tina joined the commission and thanked the commission for the recognition, she explained her travel and artistic plans in her retirement.

Chair Garthe highlighted the 22-year career of Scott King, who is retiring in June. Scott joined the commission and expressed gratitude to the department and his excitement for his future plans.

Mike Philip, Director of the Bureau of Environmental Sustainability, thanked both Tina and Scott for their time at MDARD and bureau. Mr. Philip expressed that both were great examples of customer forward employees, and they will be missed.

Commissioner Andy Chae arrived at 9:44 a.m.

Chair Garthe highlighted Brenda Moore's 40-year career with the state of Michigan. The chair thanked Brenda for her service to the state and department.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO ADOPT THE RETIREMENT RESOLUTIONS FOR TINA CAMPBELL, SCOTT KING AND BRENDA MOORE. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Upon the arrival of member Chae, Chair Garthe asked we return to Commissioner Remarks, Comments and Travel. Commissioner Chae updated the commission that his farm had sold all their CSAs, they had finished planting tomatoes and currently were planting eggplants and peppers.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO APPROVE COMMISSIONER CHAE'S TRAVEL TO TODAY'S MEETING. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Boring informed the commission that the building had been renamed to Deborah A. Stabenow Building. The Director expressed appreciation for the former senator and her support of the agriculture industry and how fitting it is to have MDARD housed in the building named after her.

Director Boring highlighted different events he and staff had attended since the last commission meeting, including the Michigan Craft Beverage Council Summitt in Lansing, where wine and craft beverage makers from around the state gathered to support the industry. He highlighted the Michigan Healthy Climate Conference in Detroit, that was hosted by EGLE, and MDARD's partnership with the conference.

The department worked with the MSU Product Center on hosting the Making in Michigan Conference that highlighted vendors and food companies from around the state with their Michigan products. The department also hosted a national training session for pesticide inspectors from 28 states in Grand Rapids.

Director Boring attended two round tables with Senator Slotkin and had recently traveled to Washington DC to advocate for Michigan farmers with our federal elected officials. He also traveled to England and Ireland with the Governor on an economic development trip with other state department directors.

Director Boring told commissioners to watch for "Working with Whitmer" post on social media, after the governor had toured the Regenerative Agriculture Demonstration Farm at the VFW Home in Eaton Rapids. This farm highlights veteran's workforce development and bring knowledge to regenerative agriculture.

At the last commissioner's meeting, the commission heard public testimony from landowners and preservation boards on their PA 116 tax credits. The Director informed the commission that the department has worked with Treasury, the landowners, NRCS, and preservation boards to create a workable solution.

Recently, Michigan has updated the Domestic Action Plan for the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB). This plan is updated every five years as the state's response to WLEB, an effort where MDARD is in partnership with EGLE and DNR. Notable projects include investment into Water Quality Monitoring, focusing on certain watersheds, and a partnership with MSU's Institute for Water Research, which includes pay for performance, which is incentivization for farmers that achieve nutrient reductions using conservation practices.

Chair Garthe asked if in the future the commission could have a presentation on Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture and the recent Domestic Action Plan for WLEB.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

None

PFAS PRESENTATION

Dr. Laura Johnson, MDARD Chief Science Officer, introduced Abby Hendershott, Executive Director of the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART), at EGLE spell out what EGLE stands for. Ms. Hendershott gave an overview of MPART and their response to PFAS. She explained where PFAS can be found in products and in the agriculture industry.

Commissioner Chae asked for more detail on the pretreatment and what remediation includes. Ms. Hendershott explained that chrome plating factories treated their wastewater with granulated active carbon in multiple tanks to filter PFAS from the wastewater treatment plants. Afterwards, the carbon can be regenerated to be used in future filter systems.

Commissioner Williams asked if household water filters worked to filter out PFAS from drinking water. Ms. Hendershott said that under the counter filters are more likely, however the refrigerator filters depend on the filter. She said to look for certificated PFAS filters. Mr. Williams asked if well water is tested. Ms. Hendershott answered that unless you are in a noted area for PFAs, well water is not tested, however a home test kit is available, but a certified filter is a great option for the unknown.

Director Boring thanked Executive Director Hendershott for her work on PFAS and making Michigan a leader on these efforts. He also expressed thanks to Dr. Johnson and also mentioned that our next presenter, Brad Deacon has been a department resource and lead on PFAS prior to MDARD having a Chief Science Officer.

OVERVIEW OF COMMISSION POLICIES

Brad Deacon, Director of Legal Affairs and Emergency Management, introduced the current commission policies, and informed the commission that every two years a review is needed and that he will be back at the commission at a future date..

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND REQUEST

Jamie Zmitko-Somers, Agriculture Development Bureau Director, introduced the grant for Meating Hall LLC, in Zeeland, with the recommendation to award $100,000 for the expansion. This project will install a permanent 2,500 square-feet blast freezer and will allow the company to significantly increase product offerings with existing and new customers in the frozen meat category. The permanent blast freezer will provide the capability to produce approximately 9.6 million pounds of frozen meat per year, up from the current 1.5 million pounds produced in 2024. In addition, a blast freezer will provide the opportunity to become a USDA-211 Supplement-certified manufacturer for production of meat for schools, hospitals, senior living centers, jails, and other USDA purposes. Brandon Basset from Meating Hall LLC, joined the commission meeting to explain the history of their company and why the blast freezer is important in expanding into retail.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT GRANT REQUEST FOR MEATING HALL, LCC, IN THE AMOUNT OF $100,000. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers introduced the grant for Burnette Foods' Hartford with the recommendation to award $190,000 for the expansion. This $5,000,000 expansion project includes the construction of 5,000 square feet of new manufacturing space and the renovation of an existing 5,000 square foot area. The expanded facility will house new, state-of-the-art pouch line machinery and equipment, enabling the company to significantly increase its production capacity. As part of this project, 10 new full-time jobs will be created. The expansion will enhance its ability to compete with out-of-state manufacturers and help meet growing demand from both retail and foodservice customers for applesauce pouches.

Bill Sherman joined the commission meeting to explain how the applesauce pouch line would be beneficial to their company. He also shared a video of how the machine would work to fill the pouches with this grant investment.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT GRANT REQUEST FOR BURNETTE FOODS IN THE AMOUNT OF $190,000. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers introduced the grant for Community Cuts, LLC, in Prescott, with the recommendation to award $100,000 for the expansion. This investment would include a USDA inspected multi-species processing plant that will create five new jobs and provide processing for livestock producers. Another benefit to this facility is it is adjacent to the county-county modified accredited bovine TB zone. Sharon David joined the commission meeting to explain their project and its importance for processing in their area.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT GRANT REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY CUTS IN THE AMOUNT OF $100,000. COMMISSIONER CHAE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Wyant left the meeting at 11:34 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURN

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:36 A.M.

Attachments:

A) Agenda
B) Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes March 12, 2025
C) Retirement Resolution: Tina Campbell
D) Retirement Resolution: Scott King
E) Retirement Resolution: Brenda Moore
F) PFAS Presentation
G) Commission Policies
H) Food and Agriculture Investment Request Memo, Meeting Hall, LLC
I) Food and Agriculture Investment Request Memo, Burnette Foods
J) Food and Agriculture Investment Request Memo, Community Cuts