MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Deborah A Stabenow Building
Douglas Houghton Conference Room
525 West Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan

Option to Join via Remote Technology
Dial: 1-248-509-0316; Conf. ID: 598 640 912#

Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2025

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Garthe called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 11:00 a.m. on July 23, 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.
Dr. Felicia Wu, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Garthe highlighted the change to the Oak Park Project memo, updating the fund request amount. She also asked a revision be made to the agenda moving the Food and Agriculture Investment Fund Request earlier, to after the first Public Comment.

> **MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVISED JULY 23, 2025, AGENDA. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

APPROVAL OF MAY 21, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Gathe asked that the draft May 21st Meeting Minutes be corrected under the Commissioners Comments and Travels, for her comments to include: “Cherry, Apple and Pears.”

> **MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ~~CORRECTED~~ AMENDED MAY 21, 2025, MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Chair Garthe announced the next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, September 24, 2025, in Deborah A. Stabenow Building.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Commissioner Wyant has been visiting local cherry and blueberry farms for Meijer. While in Holland visiting a farm, the farmer expressed gratitude to the MDARD Regenerative Agriculture program and workshop for the farmers.

Commissioner Williams has been finalizing his wheat harvest.

Commissioner Garthe has been working in the ~~traveling around her~~ orchards, doing 5 weeks of harvest in about 2.5 weeks. The compacted schedule has had an impact on equipment. The harvest of cherries, apples and pears has been affected by the wet weather.

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

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Chair Garthe highlighted the 32-year career of Susan Trombley, who retired earlier in the month from the MDARD retail food program. The chair thanked Sue for her service to the state and department.

Director Boring recognized Cheri Ayers for her service to MDARD since 2002 on her upcoming retirement. The Director highlighted that the executive office would miss Cheri dearly, and thanked her for all she has done to keep the executive office organized during her time at MDARD.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO ADOPT THE RETIREMENT RESOLUTIONS FOR SUSAN TROMBLEY AND CHERI AYERS. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director highlighted his travel to the Mackinaw Policy Conference in May, Sustainable Ag Founders Network in New Mexico in June, and most recently, to Marquette to the Office of Rural Prosperity's Summit, where rural communities' capacity was the main discussion.

Members of the department also attended the Western Lake Erie Basin annual meeting in Adrian earlier in the month; the Director thanked Dr. Laura Johnson and Michelle Seltzer, for their continued work in that area. The Director will be meeting with the National Christmas Tree Association in Lake City, Michigan, later in the week, and the Chestnut Association in the future.

Inside the department, the MDARD Emergency Management Team has held five sample team exercises and has five more to go. These exercises help build out emergency response capabilities and how we respond to emergencies. The Director also informed the commission that the department continues to prepare for the upcoming state budget, as work continues into the summer and into the fall.

GENE THOMPSON SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES

Jeff Haarer, Producer Security and Ag Products Manager, Agriculture Development Bureau, presented the 2025 Gene Thompson scholarship to the following recipients:

Ainsley Brezvai of Hudson.
Madison Essex of Elsie.
Willow Evans of St. Johns.
Isabelle Freeland of Fruitport.
Megan Kennedy of Rochester Hills.

Isla McCubbin-Green of Freeland.
Hailey Throne of Corunna.
Taylor Throne of Corunna.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

None

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT FUND REQUEST

Jamie Zmitko-Somers, Agriculture Development Bureau Director, introduced the grant for Hildebrand Fruit LLC, with the recommendation to award $175,000. The Hildebrand Fruit company currently raises 250 acres of fruit and has a packing company. This investment grant would be helpful in constructing a new packing facility, which would double the square footage for packing and a more efficient layout. Mike Hildebrand joined the commission to explain their proposed project and how it would impact their growers, community, employees and family.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT GRANT REQUEST FOR MEATING HALL, LCC, IN THE AMOUNT OF $175,000. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Zmitko-Somers introduced the grant for City of Oak Park with the recommendation to award $225,000 for the construction of a new building that will include a year-round farmers market space and commercial kitchen for food businesses to rent to expand their companies. The space would serve as an accelerator for food entrepreneurs to help them grow into their own brick and mortar spaces. The initiative will prioritize inclusive workplace practices while supporting new and beginning farmers, providing them with resources and opportunities to thrive.

Kim Marrone, Director of Economic Development and Planning, and Tim Ciechorski, Resident Services Coordinator, joined the commission meeting to explain how the new facility will be an asset to the vendors and businesses that currently utilize the outside farmer's market. The city will support food businesses through the commercial kitchen by expanding their business into brick and motor spaces. Commissioner Garthe asked where most of the farmers that used their market were located. Ms. Marrone stated that majority of their current farms are from the Thumb region but hope with the expansion to utilize the Detroit growers.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO APPROVE A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INVESTMENT GRANT REQUEST FOR CITY OF OAK PARK IN THE AMOUNT OF $225,000. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

PRESENTATION: DOMESTIC ACTION PLAN

Dr. Laura Johnson, Chief Science Officer and Michelle Seltzer, Western Lake Erie Basin Strategist, Conservation Stewardship Division, gave a presentation on the Domestic Action Plan that was completed for the Western Lake Erie Basin. The plan highlighted how the harmful algal blooms affect the Lake Erie Basin and what strategic actions are being implemented to decrease the blooms. Ms. Seltzer reviewed the current action plan the WLEB DAP Team has organized to combat the harmful algal blooms.

Commissioner Wyant asked if the committee could verify a win from their research. Ms. Seltzer said that more water quality monitoring has made a big difference in knowing the state of Michigan's contributions to the WLEB. Commissioner Williams if there is evidence of where the phosphorus originated. Dr. Johnson said unfortunately we can't tell nonpoint run offs, but they can rely on their monitoring network on the sub watershed. Chair Garthe asked how DAP is using their

monitoring network for ingenerating data from other sources. Michelle said that EGLE has started working with citizens who are collecting data and utilizing their information. Chair Garthe also asked how other water sources are addressed. Dr. Johnson said additional areas are starting to monitor more to be more informed of the water quality.

Commissioner Wyant left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP) STANDARDS – INTRODUCTION OF 2026 STANDARDS:

Shelby Burlew and Josh Appleby, Conservation Stewardship Division, presented the 2026 standards for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program. The MAEAP team and committee took additional time this year to update all the language to current standards for the program. Ms. Burlew explained that the commission has time to review, and they would return to the September commissioner meeting for additional questions.

Commissioner Williams asked how to justify which questions pertain to the different systems. Ms. Burlew explained how letter coding symbolizes which system the farm would utilize. Chair Garthe asked how the team was organized to implement 2026 standards. Mr. Appleby explained that the team has grown in the past years, and many interest groups have expressed interest in recent years.

PROSPOSED UPDATES TO THE COMMISSION POLICIES

Director Boring explained the proposed updates for the commission policies presented to the commission. The Director explained that the commission has time to review the updates before the September commission meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURN

Due to the lack of quorum, the meeting adjourned at 12:50 P.M.

Attachments:

A) Agenda
B) Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes May 21, 2025
C) Retirement Resolution: Susan Trombley
D) Retirement Resolution: Cheri Ayers
E) Food and Agriculture Investment Request Memo, Hildenbrand Fruit LLC
F) Food and Agriculture Investment Request Memo, City of Oak Park
G) Domestic Action Plan and Presentation
H) 2026 MAEAP Standards
I) Commission Policies Updates