MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Deborah A Stabenow Building
Douglas Houghton Conference Room

Option to Join via Remote Technology
Dial: 1-248-509-0316; Conf. ID 361 914 899#

Meeting Minutes
March 18th, 2026

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Williams called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:00 a.m. on March 6, 2026. The Commissioner Assistant called roll with the following Commissioners present:

PRESENT:
David Williams, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Monica Wyant, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dr. Felicia Wu, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Andy Chae, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Dr. Tim Boring, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

ABSENT/EXCUSED:
Kathrine Garthe, Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development, joined remotely as a non-voting member.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WU MOVED TO EXCUSE CHAIR GARTHE. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 18, 2026, AGENDA. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 5, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 5, 2025, MEETING. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Vice Chair Williams opened comment from the commissioners on any agricultural information or ag-related travel since the last meeting.

Commissioner Chae is starting to work on his farm's nursery, where they are also working on marketing and logistics with a distributor in Eastern Market. The farm is working to finalize their farm corporation.

Commissioner Wu recently traveled to Washington DC to serve as President for the Society for Risk Analysis, especially associated with agriculture and public health. She also gave a speech on the recent dietary guidelines for American's published earlier this year.

Commissioner Williams attended the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable in Indianapolis, the Great Lakes Crop Summit in Mt. Pleasant and the Commodity Classic in San Antonio Texas.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO ADOPT THE COMMISSIONER'S TRAVEL TO TODAY'S MEETING. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice Chair Williams laid the commission at ease, without objection, the Commission stood at ease at the call of the chair at 9:12 a.m.
Vice Chair Williams brought the commission back to order, the time being 9:15 a.m.

Chair Garthe informed the commission that the reason for her absence was the snow was still deep in Northern Michigan after a recent snowstorm.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Vice Chair Williams recognized Lexava Smith's years of loyal service to MDARD highlighting her work in the Farmland Preservation Program. Vice Chair Williams thanked Lexia for her service to the state.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WU MOVED TO ADOPT THE RETIREMENT RESOLUTION FOR LEXAVA SMITH. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice-Chair Williams opened the nominations for the following commission officers for 2026: Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WU AS CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER CHAE SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WYANT AS VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER WU SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS AS SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Williams handed the gavel over to newly elected Chair Wu.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Boring shared that he and staff in the department have been traveling attending meetings and conferences that are impactful to growers. These meetings continue to assess and inform where agriculture stands today with the challenging economic conditions. The Director highlighted the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers organization that is under Governor

Whitmer's leadership which has been executing a sustainable agriculture initiative. This group works together with our partners in the surrounding Great Lakes States, Ontario and Quebec on economic development, environmental protection, and the new pillar of sustainable agriculture.

The Director highlighted the Farm to Family program and noted that the commission would see a presentation later in the meeting. The program recently launched the Good Food for Michigan project with an opportunity to provide food quality and access across the state. This project will be working on addressing institutional procurement barriers in schools, hospitals, and colleges, while making sure that they can break down barriers. If we're feeding people on a local basis, then that food should originate from a local basis.

The Director informed the commission that the department is in the early stages of the budgetary process. The Governor presented her recommended budget several weeks ago and a few high-level initiatives that when adopted would undertake as a department, including the creation of a new program helping beginning farmers. The department has recently presented to the House Appropriations Subcommittee and would be before the Seante Appropriations Subcommittee later in the day.

The Director spoke about the department’s commitment to the continued work around local food systems and regenerative agriculture program, which is receiving attention from other states and federal partners. The Director stated that the department is acutely aware of the challenging economic conditions that growers are facing here across the state and will continue to advocate on their behalf.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Matthew Bertrand, representing the Michigan Public Lands, Parks, and Conservation Coalition, testified before the commission.

Dr. Robert Schutzki, representing the Michigan Nursery Industry, testified before the commission.

Davis Harmon, representing the Spring Meadow Nursey, testified before the commission.

Judson LeCompe, representing the Spring Meadow Nursey, testified before the commission.

Kristopher Lentner, representing Artisans Landscape and Design, testified before the commission.

Jerry Somalski, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Audra Hynes testified before the commission.

Andy Todosconk, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Elizabeth Seagull testified before the commission.

Rob Thomas, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Shannon Fischer, representing Harder and Warner, testified before the commission.

Ryan Weesies, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Nate Weaver, representing the Michigan Wood Fibers, testified before the commission.

Evan Rosin, on behalf of the Wayne County Conservation District and on his own behalf, testified before the commission.

Kris Worley, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Elliot Rudert, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

James Begick, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Jerold Coon, representing Coon's Berry Farm, testified before the commission.

Emily Huening, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Amy Upton, on behalf of The Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Marilyn Trent, on her own behalf, testified before the commission.

Carolyn Miller testified before the commission.

Randy Butters, representing the Newago County Environmental Coalition, testified before the commission.

David Putt, on behalf of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, testified before the commission.

Jessie Schulte, representing the West Michigan Conservation Network, testified before the commission.

The following people submitted a card, but did not wish to speak:
David Tork
Andy Krauss
Jessie Romero
Jon Geer
Hugh McGillivray
Keith Johnston
Dan Papineau
Christian Clark

FARM TO FAMILY PROGRAM UPDATE:

Cheyenne Liberti, Program Manager for the Food to Family Program, presented ~~to the commission~~ an overview of the program, since it was created in 2025. Ms. Liberti highlighted how the program touches on all four priorities of the department and continues to work with farms throughout the state. Based on these priorities they are developing four pillars of priorities in the program, which include: Listening, Funding, Connecting and Coordinating. The Farm to Family Program is working across the state to facilitate these pillars with growers and consumers. The funding grants that have been provided to food hubs and stops around the state, have provided over 100,000 lbs. of produce and animal proteins reaching nearly 2000 state residents.

Commissioner Wyant asked what top opportunities the program has identified. Ms. Liberti said that the program is seeing the needs of small and medium sized farmers. She explained with the hiring of Adam Montri, farmers have an opportunity to have one-on-one coaching business planning between buyer and supplier, which helps keep steady income on the farm. The program is also seeing a need for shared licensed kitchen facilities.

BUDGET UPDATE:

Sylvia Renteria, Director of Finance and Budget, presented the commission with an update from the Executive Recommendation Budget for FY 27-28. Ms. Renteria explained that all investment proposals are from current restricted funds, they are not additional general fund requests. These proposals include a beginner agricultural careers program, qualified forest program, dangerous additives and dietary supplements, Fair Food Network Double Up Food Bucks program, and the Agriculture Equine Industry Development Fund. She also explained the transfer of the Rural Development Fund Board into the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity and the investment of upgrades to the pesticide licensing system, which is housed in the Department of Management, Technology and Budget.

Commissioner Wu asked about the proposals for dangerous additives and dietary supplements, especially with her work with the World Health Organization. Ms. Renteria explained the department is seeing additives marketed to children and younger people that are not regulated and can be found in convenience stores in energy drinks.

GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (GAAMPS) REVISION OF 2026 FARM MARKET GAAMPS:

Director Boring shared the technical error found in the 2026 Farm Market GAAMPS that removed the word fermenting in the processing definition in the 2026 GAAMP. This revised GAAMP would place the definition back to the original definition from 2025.

> **MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO ADOPT THE REVISION TO THE 2026 FARM MARKET GAAMPS. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

PROHIBITED AND RESTRICTED INVASIVE SPECIES:

Susannah Iott, the Invasive Species Program Specialist, and Katie Grzesiak, an Invasive Species Coordinator at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gave an overview of ~~recommended regulation request on Invasive Plant Species, as presented at the November meeting. Ms. Iott explained the public comment received on the recent survey, highlighting several themes heard earlier in public testimony. Ms. Iott noted that after reviewing Part 413, they did not believe the~~

~~department has statutory authority to exempt cultivars, as the law regulates species. The recommendation remained to prohibit water lettuce and water hyacinth due to their limited presence in Michigan, with the prohibition beginning one month, restrict common buckthorn, glossy buckthorn, Callery pear, and Japanese barberry with a phase-out period beginning January 2028. No cultivar exemptions are included.~~

Director Borings stated that no action would be taken today, however the Director would be reviewing the recommendation, and the department will continue to work with stakeholders on the matter Commissioner Williams asked if the risk assessment recommendation would happen annually. Ms. Iott explained that recommendations would come from risk assessment, as needed based on science and research. Commissioner Chae asked if there were examples of alternatives for the invasive species. Ms. Grzesiak offered boxwood or native honeysuckle as possible replacements for Japanese Barberry.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

ADJOURN

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 A.M.

Attachments:

A) Agenda
B) Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes November 5th, 2025
C) Retirement Resolution: Lexava Smith
D) Written Public Comments
E) Farm to Family Program Presentation
F) Budget Update Presentation
G) 2026 Farm Market GAAMPs Revision
H) Prohibited and Restricted Invasive Species Presentation
I) Prohibited and Restricted Invasive Species Public Comment