

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION FUND BOARD

Location:
Microsoft Teams
248-509-0316

Tuesday, February 16, 2021
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Member Carl Bednarski (Chairman)
Member Brian Bourdages
Member Ken DeCock
Member Jonathan Jarosz
Member Peg Kohring
Member Gary McDowell
Member Stephen Shine

STAFF PRESENT

Elizabeth Brost (Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, MDARD)
Forest (Chip) Kraus (MDARD)
Lindsay Woods (MDARD)

PUBLIC GUESTS PRESENT

Public attendees present.

1:00PM Call to Order

Chairman Bednarski called meeting to order at 1:00 PM on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 on Microsoft Teams. The minutes from the last meeting on August 6, 2020 had been approved by the Board Members previously via email.

1:05PM Farmland Manager Introduction

Elizabeth Brost introduced the new Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program Manager, Forest “Chip” Kraus. Lindsay Woods announced the meeting was being recorded.

1:20PM Local Match Allowing Federal Funds

Elizabeth Brost read Member DeCock's email with his concerns regarding applicants approved for federal funding requesting state funding as well and if this is the best use of state funding. Group discussion occurred.

- **Motion: by Member Kohring to continue to allow the federal matching funds and the state matching funds.**
- **Seconded By: Member Jarosz**

Further discussion occurred.

- **Roll Call: Yays 5; Nays: 1**
- **Motion carried.**

Board Members discussed the process if an application cannot be completed after originally selected for funding.

- **Motion: Member Kohring: Staff will have authority to continue in the rank order, one per county, to offer matching funds available to the next parcel in the event that a project is initially selected cannot be completed and will notify the Board.**
- **Seconded By: Member Bourdages**
- **Roll Call: Yays: 6; Nays 0**
- **Motion carried**

1:40PM FY2022 Application Cycle Available Funds

Micheal Hetherington, Financial Manager, Environmental Stewardship Division, MDARD, announced since the funding for these local grants are not administrative expenditures, two million dollars will be available for the fiscal year 2022 cycle. Funds may be rolled into a new year in the future if needed.

2:00PM FY2021 Scoring and Ranking

Elizabeth Brost presented the final scoring sheet for fiscal year 2021. Nine programs submitted applications; some programs submitted two applications.

Applications awarded:

1. Scio Township – Renz
2. Ottawa County – DeHaan
3. Kent County – Kruithoff
4. Webster Township – Stillwood
5. Washtenaw County – Stegenga
6. Eaton County – Whittum
7. Barry County - Wickham

Members discussed plan for remaining funds.

- **Motion: Kohring to approve the seven highest ranking parcels for funding and to then move down the approved ranking list if a grant cannot close on their easement.**
 - **Seconded By: Member Bourdages**
- **Roll Call: Yays: 6; Nays 0**
- **Motion carried.**

2:20PM FY2021 Grant Awards

Discussed earlier during FY2021 Scoring and Ranking agenda item.

3:20PM Public Comment

Public attendee from Macomb County asked the Board if there is a cap on the grant allowed per acre because the scoring sheet shows payment of \$7,500 per acre for Scio Township. Elizabeth Brost explained the limit is \$5,000 per acre but in certain areas the board has discretion to increase the amount. The Board had approved the increase in the last update to the Scoring System Policies and Procedures. Public attendee also asked how accurate the number of acres needs to be on the application. Member Kohring referred the public attendee to discuss his application with staff members and that the survey should reflect the approximate acreage. Public attendee stated his concerns with the Board getting away from protecting prime farmland. "It's not about saving farmers, just prime farmland. I think you are getting away from that especially when you do give credit when someone gets money from somewhere else." Member Bourdages replied, "We are not operating under the same legislation we were 20 years ago." Member Bourdages recognized public attendee's thoughts and added "it's not just about numbers of land it's about beginning to build long term agriculture with programs that wants to do that."

- **Motion: Kohring to approve \$7,500 per acre for Scio Township (Washtenaw County) where there is no way to buy farmland without being close to the fair market value.**
- **Seconded By: Member Bourdages**

Further discussion occurred.

- **Roll Call: Yays: 5; Nays 1**
- **Motion carried.**

3:40PM Other/Schedule Next Meeting

Member Kohring encouraged programs to keep up with qualified land use plans, it was an issue with some of the scoring this cycle. Some plans were not updated within the required 5-year period. Some do not have zoning in majority of county, so some do not have comprehensive use plans. It is just a good reminder to make sure programs are qualified to participate as it is not a one-time deal, the comprehensive plan and components must be up to date. Anytime programs have those plans available they may be submitted to MDARD for review. It is a separate process from scoring.

Elizabeth proposed the Board revisit the four categories where the 100-point program scoring could be readjusted before the next cycle. Eaton County had the highest this cycle with 60 points, so that is a range of 40 plus points. A new category of 50 points could be added. Possibly a water component or socially disadvantaged component. Member Kohring, Member Jarosz and Chairman Bednarski requested to pause on the revisit until after the Covid-19 pandemic is under control.

4:00PM Adjourn

Chairman Bednarski adjourned the meeting at 2:35 PM.