

**MICHIGAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND BOARD MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES**

August 13, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Board Members Present via Teams Meeting:

Justin Horvath, RD Fund Board Member
Fred Taccolini, RD Fund Board Member
Laura Braun, RD Fund Board Member
Margaret Minerick, RD Fund Board Member
Peter Anastor, chaired on behalf of Director Gary McDowell, MDARD

Other Attendees,

Heather Throne, MDARD
Sherri Goodreau, MDARD
Kevin Robson, Michigan Blueberry Commission

The meeting was called to order by Peter Anastor at 10:30 a.m. Peter welcomed the Board to the meeting and gave an introduction. All present gave introductions. Kevin Robson from the Michigan Blueberry Commission also joined the meeting and gave an update later in the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 31, 2020 RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND BOARD MEETING

MOTION: Justin Horvath, moved to approve the January 31, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Fred Taccolini. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

2019 Annual Report Review

Heather Throne presented an update of the previous projects funded by the board. A legislative report was presented to the board for 2019 (attachment A). Heather reported 67 proposals totaling \$5.1 million was received. Of those, 16 were recommended for funding totaling \$1,245,000. She also provided an update on past grantees:

- FY 2019 grant update
 - Closed 6 grants to date.
 - Remaining grants close on October 31, 2020.
 - Due to Covid 19, there were a few that will be awarded extensions.
- FY 2018 grant update
 - Closed on 8 grants.
 - Working to close out remaining 3 grants.
 - Food for Thought will need an extension.
- FY 2017 grant update
 - The Slagel Family Farms grant is still open. Sherri is working closely with them as they work through plumbing and electrical delays. They are in communication with us and we should be able to close this grant soon.

Project Update, Michigan Blueberry Commission

Kevin Robson joined the meeting updating the board on the Michigan Blueberry Commission grant. The Commission was formed in May 2017. Money gained from assessments is used on research. They received a 2018 Rural Development grant for \$99,300 with \$29,999 in match funding. The purpose of the grant was to plant new blueberry varieties on 5 acres at Trevor Nicolls Research Station, with a new state of the art irrigation system. The grant is now complete David Hall from MDARD will be conducting a site visit when harvest is completed later this month.

Review 2020-2021 Grant Guidelines, Timeline and Public Comment Report.

The board reviewed the guidelines from previous years. It was determined that the board is comfortable with the current guidelines. The maximum dollar request will stay at \$100,000 with a minimum 30% match. Counties with a rural population under 60,000 to be eligible to apply.

Motion: Laura Braun moved the 2020 Rural Development Fund Board Guidelines will remain the same for 2021, with livestock processing projects being encouraged. Seconded by Margaret Minerick. A roll call was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

Long Term Rural Development Fund Discussion

Peter Anastor updated the board on the possibilities to continue this program. Currently, there is one mine that is funding the program which has a closing date of 2025. Justin Horvath inquired about the possibility of federal funding. Peter suggested inviting someone from EGLE to the next meeting that works with mining to the next meeting.

Establish 2021 Meeting Schedule

Heather would like to have a board meeting in February either in Mackinaw City or via Zoom. A meeting date of February 11 was set, as well as an August 12 meeting in the Upper Peninsula.

Public Comment

No public comment

Heather noted that Laura Braun's appointment is up. Deadline is November 31 for applications.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 p.m.