



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DR. TIM BORING  
DIRECTOR

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

**July 25, 2024**

**Upper Peninsula State Fair Authority  
1001 North Lincoln Road Escanaba, MI 49829**

**Board Members Present:**

Justin Horvath, RD Fund Board Member  
Erin Kricher, RD Fund Board Member  
Victoria Leonhardt, RD Fund Board Member  
Christopher Germain, RD Fund Board Member  
Jamie Zmitko Somers, MDARD, proxy for Director Boring

**Other Attendees:**

Heather Throne, MDARD  
Tracey Barnes, MDARD  
Sara Lucas, LEO Office of Rural Prosperity  
Sasha Eliason, MDARD  
Kayla Chingman, MDARD  
Marissa Oakley, MDARD  
Jeff Lampi, City of Escanaba  
Brad Deacon, MDARD  
Donna LaCourt, MDARD

**Absent:**

Tim Boring, MDARD Director

The meeting was called to order by Jamie-Zmitko Somers at 10:01 a.m. Zmitko-Somers welcomed members of the Board and guests. Introductions were made by all in attendance. Christopher Germain moved to approve the agenda as presented. Justin Horvath seconded. Motion passed.

**Minutes of the April 10, 2024, Rural Development Board Meeting**

Justin Horvath moved to approve the April 10, 2024, meeting minutes with no changes. Second by Victoria Leonhardt. Motion passed.

**Review of Public Comment and 2025 Grant Guidelines and Timelines**

Tracey Barnes presented information collected for the 2025 public comment period. A total of five comments were received. Information was also presented for the 2025 grant guidelines and timeline. Discussion took place regarding the population eligibility criteria of 70,000 or below to be an eligible county. The Board also consulted with Sara Lucas to gather her thoughts in

regard to eligibility criteria. Justin Horvath made a motion to approve the guidelines with the directive to work with the Office of Rural Prosperity on opening the grant up to higher populations to broaden the eligibility for the grant. Erin Kricher seconded. Motion passed.

### **2023 Legislative Report**

Tracey Barnes presented the legislative report to the board. Grant projects 2017-2020 have been closed. Heather Throne stated updates to this report will be made to match the departments record retention policy so projects from 2019-2024 will be on this report next year. Jamie Zmitko-Somers noted that revenues from the mines each year have contributed to building the balance of the fund. MDARD is starting the budget process for increasing the spending authority past the \$2 million cap fiscal year 2026.

### **Presentation – City of Escanaba**

Jeff Lampi presented on the City of Escanaba's waste water treatment plant. Jeff stressed that the department's grant programs help stressed communities combat new wastewater regulations. MDARD needs to keep the money available for communities to have the best economic benefit possible.

### **Labor and Economic Opportunity's (LEO) Office of Rural Prosperity Update**

Sarah Lucas gave the Office of Rural Prosperity update to the Board. Informal conversation and discussion around the Rural Readiness Grant Program, grant writing capacity, early phased programing and leadership trainings.

### **MDARD Executive Office – FOIA/OMA/Ethics Discussion**

Brad Deacon presented the FOIA/OMA/Ethics to the Board. The presentation touched on the key takeaways from the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act and Ethics. The board was very appreciative of this information from the MDARD Executive Office.

### **Establish 2025 Meeting Schedule**

A motion was made by Chrisopher Germain to approve the meeting dates of April 10 & July 16 of 2025 for next year's meeting schedule. Tour ideas and agenda items were also discussed. Erin Kricher seconded the motion. Motion passed.

### **Public Comment**

Zmitko-Somers opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was received.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Jamie-Zmitko Somers to adjourn. Second by Justin Horvath. Motion passed. Meeting Adjourned at 12:17 p.m.