Washtenaw County Conservation District

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SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm on Thursday, September 24, 2026.

DIRECTORS PRESENT
Shannon Brines, Chair
Jill Dohner, Vice Chair
Maegen Gabriel, Treasurer
Patricia Denig, Staff Liaison
Brandan Henes, Board Secretary

~~**DIRECTORS/STAFF ABSENT**~~
Susan Morley LaCroix, Associate Director – excused

STAFF/OTHERS PRESENT
Joy Casnovsky, Executive Director
Megan Phillips Goldenberg, Development Manager
Alison Bressler, UM – Virtual – joined at 7:34 p.m.
Shazia Ansari – Virtual – left at 7:23 p.m.
Michael Miller - Virtual

OATH OF OFFICE: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

APPROVAL/ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:
Brines moved to add addition of upcoming MSU's Western Lake Eric Basin Performance-Based Conservation Adoption program to New Business 2a.
Brines moved that there will be a formal public hearing to discuss FY27 budget to New Business number 1.
Denig moved to add revision to the bookkeeping motion from the Special September 17, 2026 meeting to Old Business.
Denig moved to move Old Business number 3. To number 1. so that the guest does not have to wait.
Motion by Dohner to approve the edited Agenda. Seconded by Gabriel.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Gabriel to approve the August meeting minutes. Seconded by Denig.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

Motion by Denig to approve the Special September meeting minutes. Seconded by Dohner.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee (Gabriel): Has not met.
HR Committee (Denig): Met 9/4/26. Focused on administrative leave for Finance Administrator. Tabled working on the leave of absence policy. Sub-committee meeting this month with plans for a report at October board meeting.
Leadership Committee (Brines): Met to discuss FY27 and current Agenda.
Farmer Committee (Dohner): date of 11/2/26 for first farmer committee meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Unavailable

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Motion by Gabriel to approve payment of bills. Seconded by Dohner. Denig amends to pay the bills in the amount of $22,900.04 as summarized.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays.
Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE/PUBLIC NOTICE

- EGLE – authorized large quantity water withdrawal in Section 8 of Northville Township.
- EGLE – authorized large quantity water withdrawal in Section 29 of Pittsfield Township.

FARMLAND AGREEMENTS & CONSERVATION PLANS

- PA116 – Careon – Superior Township
  Motion by Denig to approve Farmland Agreement PA116 in Superior Township. Seconded by Dohner.
  Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays.
  Motion carried.

STAFF & PARTNER REPORTS

Conservation Specialist – Nick Machinski
Resource Specialist - Doug Reith
Development Manager - Megan Phillips Goldenberg (no report)
Community Forester - Matt DeJonge
Community Engagement Specialist – Jill Lada
Washtenaw County Farm Bureau - Sue Rodgers (no report)

Produce Safety Technician, Genesee CD – Micah Thibodeau-Williams
MDARD Regional Coordinator- Nadene Berthiaume
MACD September Update – Kel Anders

OLD BUSINESS

1. To consider dismissal, suspension or discipline of an employee. A memo addressing the more critical and current issues was provided to the board and Ms. Ansari regarding the more critical and current issues. Brines asked the employee, Shazia Ansari, WCCD Finance Administrator, whether she would like a closed session. She requested a public hearing. HR liaison Denig summarized a timeline from her tenure as interim Executive Director from June 2026 through the end of August 2026. Denig outlined the FA's failure to perform basic job responsibilities, which led to written and verbal coaching memos, and two written disciplinary memos for insubordination. Denig stated that the issues continued and appeared to escalate during the transition to the new Executive Director (ED). A disciplinary hearing was held between the FA and the new ED on September 3, 2026, where FA requested that her disciplinary memos be removed from her personnel file. That request was denied on September 9, 2026. Using the WCCD policies as a guide, the HR Committee placed the FA on administrative leave on September 11, 2026.

   Ms. Ansari was given 15 minutes to comment in the meeting. She denied the disciplinary actions, calling them allegations, and stated that her dismissal was retaliation for information she had discovered. When Brines and Gabriel and Dohner asked what this information was, and why it had never been brought to the board, she could not answer. Brines moved that the board deliberate. Denig recused herself from deliberation and voting because she brought the matters forward. The Board stated that the documentation was strong enough to move to terminate. Brines reminded Ansari that under the WCCD Policy Manual she has the right to submit a grievance.
   Motion by Dohner to terminate employee for unsatisfactory performance. Seconded by Henes.
   Roll Call – Gabriel – yay, Dohner– yay, Henes – yay, Brines – yay. Denig abstained. Motion carried.
   Additional motion by Dohner to terminate employee, Shazia Ansari, for unsatisfactory performance effective 9/24/26. Seconded by Henes.
   Roll Call – Gabriel – yay, Dohner – yay, Henes – yay and Brines – yay. Denig abstained. Motion carried.

2. Land Use Resolution – Denig, Resolution No. 2026-002 – "The Washtenaw County Conservation District supports policies, incentives and local decision making frameworks prioritizing the protection and preservation of Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland.
   Motion by Dohner to adopt the forgoing resolution 2026-002. Seconded by Gabriel.
   Vote: 4 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

3. Board Meeting Agenda Structure – Brines, Revisit proposal to call out public comment in agenda structure.
   Motion by Denig to add 5 minutes of Public Comment to the meeting and 3 minutes at the end of the meeting. Person making public comment will provide their Name and Township in which they reside. Seconded by Gabriel. Vote: 4 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

4. Revision to bookkeeping motion from 9/17 Special Meeting – **Motion by Denig to revise the approval for bookkeeping services to include multiple consultants at the threshold of $16,545. Seconded by Dohner. Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.**

NEW BUSINESS

1. FY27 Budget - **Motion by Gabriel to formally move into budget hearing. Seconded by Dohner. 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.**
   No public comment. Growth of 32% up from FY2026. Bottom line numbers are good and reasonable.
   a. FY27 CD Appropriations Act – Gabriel read into record "A resolution to establish a general appropriations act for the Washtenaw County Conservation District; to define the powers and duties of the Washtenaw County Conservation District Staff and Board of Directors in relation to the administration of the budget."
      Section 5: Estimated Revenues – Estimated district general fund revenues for fiscal year 2027, shall total $2,173,922.52.
      Section 6: Estimated Expenditures – Estimated district general fund expenditures for fiscal year 2027, shall total $2,173,922.52.
      Motion by Gabriel to adopt the foregoing resolution and General Appropriations Act as stated. Seconded by Denig. Roll Call: Denig – yay, Gabriel – yay, Dohner – yay, Henes – yay and Brines – yay. The Board declared this motion carried and the resolution duly adopted on this day of September 24, 2026.

      Motion by Dohner to conclude budget hearing. Seconded by Henes. Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

2. Grant/MOU Updates – Goldenberg gave verbal updates.
   a. Upcoming grants, applications in development –
      i. MSU's Western Lake Erie Basin Performance-Based Conservation Adoption Program. MACD is recommending districts not accept incentive payments until further notice More details to come.
      ii. EGLE Watershed Council Support – new grant application up to $40,000. Led by Conservation Specialist Nick Machinski - Interactive wayfinding and education signage about water quality and protective surface water quality at Calder Dairy. Will be handed over to Monroe Conservation District.
   b. Pending Notice

i. USDA NIFA Specialty Crop Research Initiative Grant – likely to get subaward within 3 months.

ii. NACD TA – Our application is strong. It allows us to help the local office and support farmers. It can be a difficult position. There was discussion not to be considered and focus on current staff.

Motion by Denig to table NACD TA pending notice until further information is received. Seconded by Dohner. Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays. Motion carried.

iii. EGLE/EPA MyFarms – Chair would like to recognize Alison Bressler (virtual) – potential to increase the grant award if we add the EGLEManure Management grant.

c. Grants/MOU for BOD Signature - no request for action at the moment.

i. SARE – MOU First Gen Farm Mentors – SARE would like to issue a Purchase Order. WCCD has asked for MOU instead.

ii. USDA BFRDP – MiFarmLink Passing the Plow – we signed the letter of commitment and supported the application but due to staffing there is a possibility it may not come to WCCD.

iii. MDARD OPS, CTAP – no changes expected to MDARD OPS grant.

Motion by Brines to proceed with CTAP for FY27 acknowledging that we will have expected dollars as if it is forthcoming. Seconded by Denig.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays.
Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING

1. Regular Board Meeting: Thursday, October 22nd at 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:09
Motion by Gabriel to adjourn. Seconded by Dohner.
Vote: 5 yays, 0 nays.
Motion carried.

THESE MINUTES STAND TO BE APPROVED.
MINUTES APPROVED
APPROVAL SIGNATURE _____ 10/22/26