

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Constitution Hall
Atrium Level, Con-Con Conference Room
525 West Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933

MEETING MINUTES AUGUST 8, 2012

PRESENT:

Diane Hanson, Secretary, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Don Coe, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Trever Meachum, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Jamie Clover Adams, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

ABSENT:

Velmar Green, Chairperson, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Bob Kennedy, Vice Chairperson, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Secretary Hanson called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 1:35 p.m. on August 8, 2012. Commissioner Coe called the roll with Commissioners Coe, Hanson, and Meachum, and Director Clover Adams present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR AUGUST 8, 2012. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MEACHUM. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF JULY 17, 2012, MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Coe made one correction to the last paragraph on page three of the July 17, 2012, meeting minutes, changing that to read: "He attended the festival, during which the Cherry Farmer of the Year Award was presented to Bob Gregory."

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE JULY 17, 2012, MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MEACHUM. MOTION CARRIED.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 12, at the Coopersville Farm Museum, Coopersville, Michigan.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Commissioner Coe reported he attended the July 25 meeting of the Michigan City Managers Association in Traverse City, at which Mike DiBernardo, from the Michigan

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), made a very effective presentation.

Rain continues to escape the Grand Traverse area; however, the wine grapes look very good. The Northwest Michigan Fair has just begun and a good fair week is expected.

Commissioner Meachum reported that between daily running of irrigation systems and caring for his newly-born twins, he stayed close to home this past month.

Vegetable crops are seeing excellent yields and because of the drought conditions, disease problems have not been an issue. Unfortunately, where it has been extremely hot, there have been some pollination problems. Even though the area received some rain recently, corn and beans remain very poor due to lack of water and only 20-25 percent yields are anticipated on dry land grains.

This is the worst year they have seen for worms in crops; because of the mild winter, multiple generations are producing. Growers in the area are looking forward to starting over in 2013.

Commissioner Hanson reported the recent Breakfast on the Farm held at the VanDrese Dairy and Potato Farm was extremely successful with approximately 2,400 people in attendance. A surprising fact that emerged from the surveys was that, even though they reside in a rural area, 47 percent of attendees indicated it was the first time they had been on a farm.

On August 21, a meeting will be held to determine the educational component for the AgBioResearch Center in Chatham.

Pests have been a problem for the potato industry, especially since they appeared so much earlier this year. Combining of oats has begun, and barley, although very short, is yielding well.

She has been working on the Upper Peninsula (UP) State Fair, which begins next week. They have a new Miracle of Life building, which Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) and GreenStone Farm Credit Services sponsored. The Growing Up Foresters Exhibit will also be featured in that building to showcase the logging industry.

The heritage town of Saint Nicholas, which is a small agriculture community started 100 years ago by immigrants from Belgium, celebrated its anniversary recently. Over 125 people attended the event.

In addition to travel previously mentioned, Commissioners Coe, Hanson, and Meachum traveled to attend today's meeting. There was no other travel submitted for approval.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEACHUM MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER COE. MOTION CARRIED.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Clover Adams reported the Livestock Sale-Exhibition held in conjunction with Ag Expo last month produced over \$172,000 in sales, with about \$50,000 being allocated to the scholarship fund.

She toured the Capitol Farmers Market with the Governor, which was an outstanding event. She encouraged everyone to visit the Governor's website to view his videos on the importance of agriculture in Michigan.

At the end of September, she will accompany the Governor on a trip to China. The team is meeting to determine what Michigan products and opportunities may interest the Chinese.

She attended the Huron County Farm Bureau meeting last week and was pleased to see leadership by many young people in the area. Hillsdale and Isabella County Farm Bureau meetings are on her itinerary in the near future.

Friday morning, she will participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Bovine Tuberculosis Audit Exit Interview to emphasize the importance of this project to the department in moving toward eradication of the disease.

MIRS published an article recently that was critical of the Michigan State University (MSU) study on the economic impact of agriculture in Michigan. Chris Peterson's explanation of the study was published the following day and she encouraged Commissioners to view that article.

DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL

Director Clover Adams requested travel for the September 17-28 Michigan China Mission with the Governor, and for the September 12-17 National Association of Departments of Agriculture Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, which Chief Deputy Director Wenk will be attending on her behalf.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MEACHUM. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)

There was no public comment relative to agenda items.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Commissioner Coe reported MFB issued a statement yesterday concerning the Farm Bill, which was strongly worded and extremely helpful. MFB's statement followed the Commission's Resolution to the Congressional Delegation last month. Because it cannot afford to wait until after the November election, the entire agriculture industry hopes to have action on the Farm Bill during this session of Congress.

FARM BILL UPDATE – U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE: Joe Shultz, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; and Mary Judnich, Regional Manager, Office of Senator Stabenow

Mr. Joe Shultz thanked the Commission for the opportunity to share an update on the 2012 Farm Bill, noting he is the economist for Chairwomen Stabenow and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Ms. Mary Judnich, who is the Regional Manager in southwest Michigan for Senator Stabenow and one of the state contacts for the Farm Bill, joined Mr. Shultz for the presentation.

Mr. Shultz advised those in agriculture realize, although it sets policy related to commodities, the Farm Bill is really about the rural economy and jobs. And, because our food system is completely integrated, it is becoming more about the suburban and urban economies as well. As the Chairwoman approached the process to reauthorize the Farm Bill nearly a year ago, she considered how to take the extremely complex bill and ensure it focuses on economic development and jobs.

He pointed out highlights of American agriculture, which are the focus of the Farm Bill: 16M jobs in the U.S. rely on American agriculture; it enjoys a trade surplus, which is \$136B this year, with a 270 percent increase since 2000; and it has been a bright spot in the U.S. economy as the rest of the segments struggled. The Chairwoman wants to ensure the new Farm Bill strengthens American agriculture.

He noted the drought and disaster situations have changed the way the Chairwoman approached the Farm Bill. Per USDA, 91 percent of Michigan is now experiencing abnormally dry or drought conditions, 43 percent (southern portion of the state) is experiencing severe to moderate drought, 52 percent of the corn and 38 percent of the soybeans are rated poor to very poor, and there is no relief in sight for our commodity producers. Added to that is the disaster that most of the state's fruit growers faced this spring.

Fortunately, there is a crop insurance system in place and it is estimated that federally supported program will cover approximately \$100M of liability. However, there is concern about producers who do not have access to crop insurance. The 2012 Farm Bill will allow producers without access to crop insurance to retroactively purchase 65 percent "buy-up" coverage for losses in 2012 under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Producers who elect higher coverage levels would pay a nominal premium based on the value of their production and acres planted, and could receive up to \$100,000 to cover losses. In addition, the bill retroactively extends the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), which will be available to all producers who purchased either crop insurance or NAP, and will pay producers the cost of replacing or rehabilitating trees, grape vines, or fruit bushes lost to natural disasters.

In the long term, Michigan growers need better access to crop insurance so they can manage their risk from weather disasters. Senator Stabenow's Farm Bill includes a number of provisions to help ensure specialty crop producers have appropriate crop insurance options available to them. It expands public-private partnerships to develop new insurance products, creates new authority for research and development, simplifies and expands whole farm insurance, creates an innovative pilot program for indexed-based weather insurance, improves crop insurance for organic producers, and improves crop insurance for beginning farmers and ranchers.

On July 2, the Secretary of Agriculture declared 72 Michigan counties a disaster area. This means that any farmer who owns or operates land in a county that is part of that disaster area will be eligible for emergency loans from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), whose local offices can provide additional information. This also means that loans will be available from the Small Business Administration to help small businesses and agriculture co-ops that suffered severe economic injury as a result of the late freeze. Up to \$2 million is available to cover costs and is only available if a business cannot get other credit. Additional information and application is available online at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

The Senate's 2012 Farm Bill contains a new philosophy on the role of federal government in supporting producers and focuses on risk management. Responsible risk management tools help ensure that farmers – and farm jobs – are not wiped out by disasters, and protect all American families from sudden spikes in food prices.

The 2012 Senate Farm Bill reforms farm programs to save taxpayer dollars, while providing farmers with a responsible risk management system that is market-based, treats all commodities fairly, and only helps farmers when they experience substantial losses on crops they are actually growing. This proposal eliminates direct payments, ends farm payments to non-farmers, strengthens crop insurance, consolidates three remaining farm programs into one, and caps payments for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC). Reforming farm programs saves \$15 billion that is reinvested in various risk management tools.

By eliminating duplicative programs, funds are concentrated in the areas in which they will have the greatest impact, reducing the deficit while strengthening top priorities. The Senate Farm Bill eliminates over 100 programs and authorizations under the Agriculture Committee's jurisdiction. For example, the bill consolidates 23 existing conservation programs into 13, while maintaining existing tools to protect and conserve land, water, and wildlife; streamlines programs to provide flexibility and focus conservation around four primary functions; and saves money while still increasing resources for top priorities. Changes to conservation policies are supported by nearly 650 conservation organizations from all 50 states.

At a time when many out-of-work Americans are in need of food assistance for the first time in their lives, it is more critical than ever that resources go only to those who are struggling. The Senate Farm Bill increases accountability in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by eliminating gaps in standards to stop overpayments and improve program integrity; stopping lottery winners from continuing to receive assistance; ending misuse by college students whose families are not truly low-income; cracking down on retailers and recipients engaged in benefit trafficking; and increasing requirements to prevent liquor and tobacco stores from accepting food assistance benefits. These savings reduce the deficit while continuing support for local food banks, seniors' food programs, and healthy school lunch initiatives.

The 2012 Farm Bill also provides agricultural job initiatives through export opportunities to help farmers find new global markets; help for family farms to sell locally; continuation of the Specialty Crop Block Grants; increased support for farmers markets, spurring

creation of food hubs; training and access to capital to make it easier for beginning farmers; initiatives to help American veterans start agriculture businesses; growth and innovation in rural energy and bio-based manufacturing to create jobs and support non-food based production; research to promote commercialization of new agricultural innovations; and rural development initiatives.

The Senate Farm Bill passed this spring out of its committee with overwhelming bipartisan support. The Chairwoman led the process in the Senate which resulted in strong bipartisan approval of the bill on June 21. The House Committee passed a full five-year Farm Bill on July 12, which also had bipartisan support. However, the House leadership has declined to consider that five-year bipartisan bill. On August 2, the House did pass a disaster assistance package and while critically needed, those provisions do exist in the 2012 Senate Farm Bill. The Chairwoman's staff continues discussions in Washington in support of the Farm Bill and hopes to use the few precious days in September to move forward a package that will result in a five-year Farm Bill prior to the September 30 expiration of the current bill and bring certainty to our nation's farmers.

Mr. Shultz expressed appreciation for the Commission's support of a full five-year Farm Bill. Over the next 30 days, everyone's continued conversations with producers, stakeholders, and elected officials will be helpful.

The Director asked what it means for Michigan if there is no five-year Farm Bill on October 1. Mr. Shultz noted the Farm Bill is essentially a five-year patch to what is called the Permanent Agricultural Law, which was passed following the Great Depression. The dairy program will be the first to be impacted, and costs to both the government and consumers would increase significantly. Traditional commodity crops would not be affected immediately, but of greatest concern is the commodity market response, which would see significantly increased government involvement. Funding for all of the programs he sighted today would fall away. The Farm Bill is a collection of several independent pieces of legislation, and the initial 1933 Agriculture Adjustment Act covered the few large commodities of dairy, wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton, and rice. The Food Stamp Program would continue to operate on the short term; however, there would need to be some long-term authorizing legislation.

In response to question from Commissioner Meachum, Ms. Judnich encouraged everyone to continue reaching out to their individual House representatives. Key members to reach are Representatives Upton and Camp, who are in leadership positions.

The Commission thanked Mr. Shultz and Ms. Judnich for their informative presentation.

FARM BILL UPDATE – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE (NASDA): Nathan Bowen, Director, Legislative and Regulatory Affairs (NASDA) (Presented via Teleconference)

Mr. Bowen thanked the Commission for the opportunity to join the meeting today. NASDA represents State Departments of Agriculture from all fifty states and four territories, and is looking forward to working with Director Clover Adams.

One of the things NASDA wanted to accomplish this year with the 2012 Farm Bill was to look at programs that were significant to the state departments of agriculture and issues on which they could have particular influence.

NASDA's Farm Bill priorities include several critical programs. The Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) Program provides important financial resources to our nation's specialty crop industries. To remain effective, program funding must be maintained and the program must retain the flexibility afforded in its current structure. The SCBG program is an outstanding success story on how government and industry can collaborate to improve our agriculture competitiveness, while also providing essential health benefits to our citizens. The program provides \$55 million each year that allows state departments of agriculture the ability to address critical needs expressed by their diverse specialty crop stakeholders in a timely and relevant manner. It is exciting that the program would increase to \$70M under the new Farm Bill and provides for new multi-state partnerships.

To address the increasing threat invasive species pose to agricultural producers nationwide, bold action is required. Building on the successes of the invasive species programs created by the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress should bring additional tools to bear on this serious economic threat and create a stand-alone Invasive Species title. Enhanced coordination of other invasive species funding through APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services), the Forest Service, and NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), as well as programs operated by the Department of the Interior, should be considered to strengthen programs and maximize the value of the federal funding.

The next Farm Bill must make substantial investments in locally-driven, flexible, and efficient conservation programs that provide producers the financial and technical assistance they need to conserve our nation's natural resources and meet increasing regulatory demands. The next Farm Bill must also make additional efforts to address water quality challenges and growing federal regulatory pressures, as well as ensuring adequate funding for technical assistance and other programs, such as the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP), that document the progress of these conservation programs. NASDA will be monitoring the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program which consolidates some of the existing programs from across the country.

The 2012 Farm Bill must provide continued funding for the very important Market Access Program (MAP) and other foreign market development programs at the current levels. These programs, including MAP, the Foreign Market Development Program (FMD), Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program (TASC), and the Emerging Markets Program (EMP), were established in the Farm Bill to promote American-grown and produced commodities that are in competition with heavily subsidized foreign products. This modest investment to help small U.S. businesses gain access to foreign markets has a huge economic impact.

Much uncertainty exists around the 2012 Farm Bill process and NASDA is watching very closely. With the current fiscal situation and the election looming close, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the bill to pass the House. In the House extension proposal,

some of the traditional programs would be fine, but many of the other programs would certainly experience an impact. With Congress having only eight days of session in September, it will be a challenge, and the Farm Bill may very well be considered during the lame duck session.

In response to question from Commissioner Coe, Mr. Bowen advised, with its nationwide footprint and even though the Farm Bill can become very regional, NASDA members uniformly support the priority programs mentioned today. NASDA has not taken a specific position on funding levels, but does support adequate resources being devoted to the Farm Bill for major programs.

Mr. Bowen complimented the department on the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) it has so successfully implemented. Many in Washington are looking closely at that program. Director Clover Adams encouraged NASDA to continue monitoring MAEAP, because the department is increasing its efforts toward its goal of 5,000 verifications. Mr. Bowen advised Michigan is at the leading edge of what is currently gaining a great deal of interest.

The Commission thanked Mr. Bowen for the information he shared today.

PRESENT NEW DRAFT MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP) STANDARDS: Jim Johnson, Director, and Jan Wilford, MAEAP Manager, Environmental Stewardship Division

Mr. Johnson advised presentation of the new draft MAEAP Standards is a continuation of the process created under passage of Public Act 2 in 2011. That process includes a yearly review of MAEAP Standards as adopted by the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development. Proposed changes have been outlined for specific review between now and the September meeting when they will be formally adopted. In September, the Co-Chairs of the MAEAP Advisory Council (AC) will participate in the meeting.

Composition of the AC is clearly defined within the Act and represents a very broad spectrum of the industry, as well as those with knowledge of a general public perspective regarding environmental concerns on the farm. As part of that, the AC has created a number of subcommittees who have contributed extensive efforts to the process and are doing a tremendous amount of the legwork work to understand how the different risk assessments might actually result in some environmental impact and what the possible solutions might be.

An explanation of how the proposed changes were organized within the materials was provided. Each system contains a combination of a series of questions, some of which must be answered in a certain way in order to be verified, while others are educational in nature.

Ms. Wilford complimented all the partners who have worked in the risk assessment systems groups and the AC. An efficient system exists for tracking what is discussed in those various committees, including considering future issues and roadblocks to verification. She provided detailed explanation of some of the proposed changes.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Coe, Ms. Wilford advised the goal is to work within the framework of the Act to avoid having to again go through the legislative process. Each year, the department is asked to identify areas within the legislation that might in fact be cumbersome or present roadblocks. None of the proposed changes this year have risen to that level. She provided examples of how interagency cooperation has assisted in the process through programmatic negotiated solutions to roadblocks in lieu of legislation.

General knowledge is often extended within the standards through use of the educational questions. A recent example was inclusion of a question relative to areas of a farmstead being set aside to provide habitat for pollinators, which resulted from a special legislative educational initiative.

In response to question from Commissioner Coe, Mr. Johnson advised August 22 is the single hearing provided for the Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices (GAAMPs). Comments on the GAAMPs are also received through written materials on a routine basis for consideration by the committees. Each of the GAAMPs will be introduced during the October 31 Commission meeting in preparation for adoption at the December meeting. Program staff constantly work to ensure what is accomplished in the Right to Farm area in terms of GAAMPs is also reflected in the MAEAP Standards.

For diversified producers, Commissioner Meachum suggested a step process to verification would be helpful. Mr. Johnson advised the decision was made to divide farms into three separate systems. The cropping side does contain a large amount of diversity and separate systems were created. It is possible to complete any one of those as the first step in the process. A technician will assist the producer by identifying the easiest system with which to begin and many farmers accomplish verification through this one-system-at-a-time approach, which can be accomplished over a period of time. Ms. Wilford advised considerable duplication exists between the various cropping systems, and once those questions are satisfied in one system, they would apply to another.

Commissioner Hanson advised their farming operation is in the process of achieving verification, with new tanks being installed this week. Ms. Wilford advised that, being a credit to the various partners in identification to the roadblocks, this year cost share is available through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) which has moved many farms forward who had been waiting for an opportune time to make the economic investments required.

Commissioner Coe advised his operation recently received MAEAP re-verification. He expressed appreciation to the field technician who assisted with that process.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Commissioner Coe proposed a resolution in support of the New International Trade Crossing (NITC) be approved and forwarded to the Michigan Congressional Delegation. He shared the proposed content of that resolution:

WHEREAS, Michigan's food and agriculture system contributes \$91.4 billion each year, making it a cornerstone to our economic recovery, and production agriculture,

food processing, and related businesses employ about 22 percent of all jobs in Michigan; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan is a major producer of more than 200 commodities on a commercial basis, making Michigan second only to California in agricultural diversity; and,

WHEREAS, Michigan exports about one-third of its agricultural commodities each year; ranking in the top ten for fruits and vegetables; and,

WHEREAS, Michigan's agricultural exports generate \$1.75 billion and support 14,700 jobs both on the farm and off the farm in food processing, storage, and transportation; and,

WHEREAS, Detroit is home to the busiest border crossing in North America based on trade volume; and,

WHEREAS, a new public/private partnership with Canada to construct a second crossing connecting Detroit to Windsor, Ontario, would open the door to additional agricultural exports from Michigan; while creating no new debt for the state and no new taxes for Michigan taxpayers; and,

WHEREAS, overwhelming evidence clearly demonstrates that the New International Trade Crossing is in our nation's best interests; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development supports the proposed New International Trade Crossing to connect Detroit to Windsor, Ontario; and,

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development urges the federal government to approve Michigan's application for a Presidential Permit in a timely manner; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development transmits copies of this resolution to Governor Rick Snyder and the Michigan Congressional Delegation.

Testimony on the NITC has been called for at the federal level and it is appropriate for this Commission to indicate its support to our federal delegation.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEACHUM MOVED THE RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED NEW INTERNATIONAL TRADE CROSSING. COMMISSIONER HANSON SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Hanson advised everyone is hopeful that Commissioner Green's wife's surgery is going better than expected and she will have a quick and successful recovery.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Wendy Banka, from **Ann Arbor**, reiterated her statement made last month in reminding the Commission she believes the Michigan Right To Farm Act (RTF) was written to protect all Michigan citizens who wish to have a controlled farming operation from local nuisance lawsuits. It also contains very clear language to prevent local governments from passing ordinances that would preempt RTF.

The main point she emphasized last month was that the 2012 GAAMPs Preface language actually disenfranchised everyone living in a city of over 100,000 in population from RTF, which is 1.5M Michiganders out of 10M. Another point she made was that it is against the Commission's mission to disenfranchise citizens from agricultural abilities.

The 2013 draft GAAMPs have now been released and those appear to be even more radical, because they disenfranchise all Michiganders who do not live in agricultural regions from RTF. She requested the Commission not approve that language.

Commissioner Coe thanked Ms. Banka for coming before the Commission and noted the GAAMPs Preface was an attempt to work with the City of Detroit. He referred to the recent *Food Speak* article which explains the issues and situation in Detroit and provides good background information to be considered. He will forward a copy to Commission Assistant Cheri Ayers who will subsequently forward to Ms. Banka and the other Commissioners. He acknowledged the Preface is something the Commission should consider.

Ms. Banka acknowledged there may be other ways to move forward to allow compliance with local norms without being exempted from all RTF protection.

Director Clover Adams advised the Attorney General has been asked about this issue and is close to issuing an opinion regarding the GAAMPs Preface. However, it currently appears to indicate that the only way nuisance protection does not apply is if the local municipality passes a specific zoning ordinance, which is not contrary to the GAAMPs. The Attorney General's opinion should provide additional clarification on the issue.

Mr. Randy Zeilinger, from **Garden City**, advised he is facing severe disenfranchise and jail time because of charges resulting from a local ordinance that states he is not allowed to have a few chickens in his yard. He has been advised that the zoning supersedes all other rules that apply. Director Clover Adams advised there clearly are court decisions that are contrary to that position. Mr. Zeilinger noted his prosecuting attorney advises that because of the 2012 GAAMPs Preface, all previous decisions are mute and they can charge as they wish. He feels local city government has twisted the intent.

If new people are to be involved in farming, it often begins small. One living within a suburban setting does not have that opportunity without having protection provided from the state. The uniformity that can be provided by RTF and the GAAMPs removes much of the guess work by taking away the agendas of local governments and helps all citizens.

Commissioner Hanson advised the Commission should wait for the Attorney General's opinion to help clarify the situation. Commissioner Coe advised many years were spent creating RTF and if the Commission has weakened what took so many years to achieve, that was not their intent.

Mr. Zeilinger advised he would be willing to assist in any way possible to help educate others on the situation.

Ms. Michelle R. Brejnak submitted a written statement expressing concerns with the GAAMPs Preface language. Ms. Ayers will make that part of the official record and forward a copy of that statement to the Commissioners, Director, and RTF staff.

Ms. Rachel Mathews, from **Leslie**, reiterated what had been expressed by Mr. Zeilinger regarding the GAAMPs Preface language. She further made comments specific to the 2013 draft Site Selection GAAMP and submitted a written statement in that regard.

She feels that based on the way the GAAMP is written, any number of animals in a high density location will most likely not meet the GAAMP simply because of the “allowable” animal units and she proposed several changes to address that. She also proposed several specific changes in order to help protect citizens with a small number of animals, such as 4-H families or people with a handful of backyard hens.

As requested by Commissioner Meachum, Ms. Mathews will provide a summary of what she is trying to accomplish through an email to Ms. Ayers, who will subsequently share with the Commissioners, Director, and RTF staff. Mr. Johnson advised he will ensure her written statement and summary become part of the official GAAMPs comment record.

ADJOURN

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MEACHUM MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes July 17, 2012*
- C) *Director – Issues of Interest Report*
- D) *Resources for Michigan Fruit Growers – Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow*
- E) *The Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act – US Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry*
- F) *NASDA’s Farm Bill Priorities*
- G) *MAEAP Standards Documents*
 - *2011 MAEAP Standards*
 - *A*Syst Documents*
 - *MAEAP Standards Summaries of Changes*
 - *Draft 2013 MAEAP Standards*
 - *MAEAP Advisory Council Members*
 - *MAEAP Educational Questions*
- H) *Resolution in Support of NITC*
- I) *Public Comment – Michelle R. Brejnak*
- J) *Public Comment – Rachel Mathews*