

**MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE
Geagley Laboratory, Gordon Guyer Room
1615 S. Harrison Road
East Lansing, Mi 48823**

**MEETING MINUTES
January 8, 2009**

PRESENT:

James Byrum, Chairperson
Ann Jousma-Miller, Vice Chairperson (via Teleconference)
Dale Norton, Secretary
Don Coe, Commission of Agriculture
Todd Regis, Commission of Agriculture
Don Koivisto, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Byrum called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture to order at 9:02 a.m. on January 8, 2009. Commissioner Dale Norton called the roll with Commissioners Byrum, Coe, Norton, Regis, and Director Koivisto present, and Commissioner Jousma-Miller joining via teleconference at 9:15 a.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR JANUARY 8, 2009. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER REGIS. MOTION CARRIED.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2009

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED TO CAST A BALLOT RETAINING THE 2008 SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2009: COMMISSIONER JAMES BYRUM AS CHAIRPERSON, COMMISSIONER ANN JOUSMA-MILLER AS VICE CHAIRPERSON, AND COMMISSIONER DALE NORTON AS SECRETARY. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER NORTON. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 9, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 9, 2008, MEETING MINUTES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER REGIS. MOTION CARRIED.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting will be held on February 18, 2009, at the Geagley Laboratory, in East Lansing, Michigan.

COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL

There was no travel submitted for approval.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Norton reported as part of the new Farm Bill, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began enrollment in the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program (DCP) on December 22, 2009, and enrollment in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program will begin in April. Equipment dealers reported year-end efforts by producers to make machinery purchases to take advantage of the additional \$250,000 first-year depreciation.

Commissioner Coe reported he met yesterday with Senator Allen's staff; the Senator has agreed to reintroduce SB1595, which is a modified Distillers Bill to address issues not covered in the original Distillers Legislation passed in July. The original bill did not provide for sales of spirits in offsite tasting rooms. Commissioner Coe requested support from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) in moving this bill forward.

While traveling in Virginia recently, he noticed their agriculture tourism signage uses wording similar to what Michigan has for its equestrian facilities – essentially the sign warns there is no liability for an injury or death of a participant in an agricultural tourism activity conducted at that agricultural tourism location if such injury or death results from the inherent risks of the agricultural tourism activity. As the industry is growing in Michigan, he requested the department pursue the institution of similar liability protection for its agriculture tourism operators, specifically looking at the liability protection given for equestrian operations and potentially broadening that language to include other agricultural tourism activities.

Commissioner Regis complimented the department on the excellent press relative to food safety recall notices now available on the Website, as well as the recent press release highlighting the positive future for agriculture. In today's State Journal, an article featured the Garden House, a project of the City Parks and Recreation and the Allen Neighborhood Center, which offers 24 planting beds in an enclosed greenhouse and operates year-round with volunteers. He emphasized the department needs to continue making food safety and consumer advocacy a priority; also, it should continue efforts toward amending the Weights and Measures Law to give the department enforcement authority.

Commissioner Byrum noted we are in the midst of the largest Salmonella outbreak in the history of the United States and the source has not yet been determined. To date, it has been reported in 42 states.

Fertilizer prices have been fluctuating; nitrogen in particular is down dramatically. Because fertilizer product is not currently moving, it will be difficult to fill the system when needed for spring planting, which may create spot shortages. Commodity prices have strengthened somewhat. It appears farmers have committed for enough seed to plant all of their acres twice, leaving planting intentions in a state of flux.

VeraSun's bankruptcy will affect more people than anyone wants to realize. Contracts for corn sold directly to VeraSun will be voided and there is an appeal to the Produce Insurance Indemnity Fund to cover the difference in their contracted price. VeraSun will be producing ethanol in the near future.

With the loss of many financial institutions, obtaining credit is difficult for agriculture customers today, especially in light of the tremendously increased operating lines of credit required to operate a farm today. Commissioner Coe suggested the department might be able to assist with the current agriculture credit issue by disseminating the recent positive agriculture industry report to the banking sector, noting there may be a significant part of the farming community seeking new credit.

The annual Michigan Agri-Business Association conference is being held next week at the Lansing Center. Any Commissioner wishing to attend was invited as the Association's guest.

Commissioner Jousma-Miller reported several new young farmers are establishing in the Upper Peninsula (U.P.), which is a welcome new trend and represents positive economic growth for the U.P.

The Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) testing between Pfizer and Michigan State University received a great deal of cooperation from MDA's Dr. Brunner and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); results revealed four BVD positive herds. The testing has been quite successful and their goal is to eradicate BVD in the U.P. in the near future.

The U.P. was very proud to have recently received several of the Michigan Milk Producers Association's awards this year.

She plans to attend portions of the Drain Commissioners Annual meeting, which is being held in Traverse City the third week of February.

The U.P. has a potential \$4 billion operation hoping to locate in Alger County – a 72,000 square foot greenhouse for raising tomatoes. Director Koivisto advised the department will be contacting these developers to ascertain if there is anyway MDA can assist in facilitation of the project.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Koivisto reported the department recently analyzed the Select Michigan Program; suggestions for improvement included the development of a broad-based advisory group, which is in process. The program will also be expanded into a state-wide initiative.

On December 18, MDA met with a cross-section of the cervid industry to alert them to the potential of transferring the animal health portion of the program to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to provide for all aspects of the program being administered by one agency. Additional preliminary work, including dialog with MDNR, is being conducted to analyze which is the best option for the program and for the industry. The cervid industry will also be working to develop industry positions on the issue. Because the federal government will most likely no longer pay indemnity for depopulated cervid and hunting swine herds, MDA is developing a position in this regard to protect the state. Commissioners Byrum and Coe emphasized the cervid industry needs to organize, take responsibility, and address funding mechanisms. Director Koivisto advised the industry has begun an effort to organize with two regional meetings scheduled this month. Commissioner Byrum noted (1) the industry should be aware they are required to pay sales tax on any sales of meat produced from their hunts; (2) the state needs to develop a manageable means of regulating the industry; and (3) because of the high costs to MDA, the fact that no additional funding will come to MDA to administer the program, and because it is not part of the department's core mission, this program is something that should be removed from the department's responsibility. Commissioner Jousma-Miller suggested that as we move forward, both MDNR and MDA be very conscious of the critical difference between wildlife and the farm-raised animals represented by the cervid industry. Director Koivisto noted the Legislature, of course, plays a decisive role in any potential changes to administration of the program. He also reported that MDNR has proposed a moratorium on the establishment of any new cervid facilities; and following considerable discussion, it was concluded the Commission would support this concept.

MDA recently held a very positive press conference with Gerber Products Company in Fremont. Gerber's expansion includes modernization of the existing manufacturing facility, the addition of production lines, purchasing of new equipment, and a new warehouse and distribution center. The company will invest \$75 million in the Fremont facility, maintain 1,100 jobs, and create an additional 200 new jobs. Indirect jobs may also be created as the company

purchases 61,000 tons of produce for their product line from more than 200 Michigan growers. Additionally, they purchase \$36 million in packing and raw materials from 11 key Michigan-based suppliers.

Release of MDA's year-end economic report emphasizes the positive events and promising growth in the agriculture industry. Commissioner Byrum requested the report be converted into a PowerPoint presentation so that it can be easily shared with other audiences. The report was forwarded electronically to the Legislature and hard copies will be provided during the department's upcoming meetings with each of the 45 new legislators and their staff. Commissioner Regis also suggested that, after January 20, copies of the report be provided to the 17 nationally-elected representatives.

Toward the end of February, the new agriculture census data will also become available, which will be very positive, depicting an even larger impact of the agriculture industry on today's economy in Michigan. A press conference will be coordinated around this data and will also include highlights of the MSU 2008 Economic Impact of Michigan's Agri-Food System Report. The agriculture companies currently in Michigan plan to stay in Michigan, with many planning to expand. The average wage in the industry is between \$13.00 and \$26.00 per hour with full benefits and retirement, which represents a significant sector of Michigan's economy.

In follow-up to discussion on item pricing complaints during previous Commission meetings, the department recently forwarded information on the top 20 offenders to the Office of the Attorney General.

DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL

Director Koivisto has no out-of-state travel in the near future. Chief Deputy Director Gordon Wenk will attend the Mid-Year National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) conference to be held in Washington, D.C., February 19-22. NASDA hosts three to four meetings each year, and to conserve funds, he and Gordon will alternate participation on behalf of the department.

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)

There was no public comment relative to agenda items.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Nancy Nyquist, Legislative Liaison

Ms. Nyquist reported the first day of session is January 14 and the Governor's State of the State address has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 3. January will see primarily the introduction of new bills and committee assignments, with not much action anticipated. Composition of Senate

Committees will most likely not change, but there will be changes to the House Standing Agriculture Committee and likely, the Subcommittee as well.

Dates for she and the Director to meet with the 45 new legislators are being scheduled, and once Appropriations Committee members are known, Budget Officer Amy Epkey will join those meetings as well. Printed copies of MDA's economic report will be delivered during those meetings.

Included in bills not passed in the previous session were the Julian-Stille Agriculture Innovation Grant legislation, the smoking ban legislation, and legislation banning retailers' sale of beer and wine for delivery directly to customers. It is anticipated these bills will be reintroduced early in the new session. Most other bills acted upon, but not passed last year, will most likely also be reintroduced.

HB6604, which modifies the total weight compliance standard for a coupled vehicle is now P.A. 345. A Representative Byrum bill that allows for the flat rate sale of liquefied petroleum is now P.A. 351. The Governor has also signed the Farm to School Bills.

Commissioner Byrum advised that with potentially only three agricultural individuals among the 45 new legislators, we face a tremendous challenge explaining agriculture's role and its impact in the state. He is part of a three-person work group addressing this issue to determine what actions might be taken to improve the situation, including various regional activities around the state highlighting production on the farm, agri-business, and processing. Commissioner Regis noted the department should take advantage of every opportunity to market itself to the new legislators. And he suggested that, working with producers and processors, perhaps the department could sponsor educational sessions for new legislators when possible, potentially through receptions on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings when many are in Lansing. Director Koiviso advised that in addition to department meetings with legislators, MDA will be identifying a champion within each party and in each chamber to carry issues and initiatives through the legislative process.

BUDGET UPDATE: Amy Epkey, Budget Officer

Ms. Epkey reported the State's Revenue Estimating Conference will be held Friday, January 16 and the Governor's budget will be introduced in early February. At this point, the department is involved in daily discussions with the State Budget Office in terms of what will be included in the Executive Budget. The department continues to stress the importance of our programs, focusing on the core functions within MDA and the fact that agriculture represents a \$64 billion industry. The budget process will begin in the Senate this year and the department will be focusing its presentations on the economic factors.

The review of departmental programs is proceeding and will be balanced with input received from the industry and from staff – from which an overall strategic plan will be developed to move the department forward.

Commissioner Byrum noted it is estimated that more than a \$1 billion loss is predicted for the State this year and the forecast for next year is not optimistic. He reiterated the department needs to continue working to determine what activities are required by statute versus what we can actually accomplish – there is a fundamental decision that the Commission as a policy board needs to make in encouraging the Legislature to release the department from responsibilities it no longer can administer.

ANIMAL INDUSTRY UPDATE: Dr. Steven Halstead, State Veterinarian

Dr. Halstead reported depopulation of the privately owned cervid (POC) facility in Saginaw County where the initial Pseudorabies (PRV) was detected is now complete. Work with USDA Wildlife services later this month will confirm if there are any more animals on the property. Until the court case is also complete, no cervids will be allowed to move back onto the facility. No state indemnity was paid in this effort.

Dr. John Tilden will be leaving the bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Program in the near future, returning to the Food and Dairy Division to lead the department's Rapid Response Team effort. Recruitment for a replacement is underway.

A bovine TB positive beef herd was detected in Alpena County. The fewer than 40-head herd has been ordered destroyed and an appraisal completed. Once USDA Regional Office approves that appraisal, it will be presented to the owner.

Also detected recently is a bovine TB positive POC operation in Montmorency County, with approximately 130 white-tailed deer on 100 acres. The destruction order has been signed and indemnity negotiations are underway with USDA.

Commissioner Byrum requested a summary report of the total MDA and MDNR expenditures, including indemnity costs, over the last five years for the cervid operations. Dr. Halstead will proceed with developing such a report.

Relative to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), only the one animal from Kent County has tested positive. Nearly 3,100 animals within the POC operations have been tested and MDNR has tested close to 9,000 wild animals. MDNR is required to test wild animals for three years following a positive find and MDA will continue to test all dead or culled animals from POCs in the future. In February, a more complete update on testing will be provided to both Commissions and

during the March meeting, MDNR will report on the bovine TB testing from the fall hunt.

Of the almost 600 POC facilities, 212 have been released from quarantine, 22 have been decommissioned, and 64 have expressed interest in pursuing the decommissioning process. This week, notice of required facility compliance with P.A. 190 and 466 will be communicated to all facilities through a joint letter, which includes the higher fencing requirements (from eight to ten feet) and bovine TB and CWD testing requirements. Any facility not in compliance when visited for re-licensing will not be renewed. A copy of the letter will be provided to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Byrum inquired if MDNR has criteria in place to provide for feeding of deer under heavy snowfall conditions; and if so, how does MDNR justify that practice after they banned baiting and feeding during hunting season. Subsequent to the meeting, MDNR Wildlife Division confirmed their department does not feed deer, nor is there an obligatory provision for supplementally feeding deer due to winter severity or snowfall; however, feeding permits to others in the U.P. are issued and permittees must follow Natural Resource Commission restrictions. Also, when MDNR completes forest management cuttings in cedar forests, they do leave the limbs (as is customary in all forest management or harvesting operations) and the deer will browse them; but, it is not done to provide a resource to the deer.

Contagious Equine Metritis, a foreign-animal bacterial venereal disease of horses, has been detected in seven stallions in Kentucky and Ohio and has resulted in traces to over 250 mares across most of the U.S., 27 of which are in Michigan. As a foreign animal disease, USDA is responsible for handling the situation and the Animal Industry Division (AID) is working with them to assist with communications. The disease causes infertility, fetal loss, and consistent infections in the affected mares. The disease can be treated and eliminated.

In response to question by Commissioner Regis, Dr. Halstead advised feral horses continue to be an issue and there are horses suffering because owners are unable to buy feed. Where appropriate, AID works with the Right to Farm staff, local law enforcement, and animal control to conduct investigations and find remedies. Recently, a veterinarian from the American Association of Veterinarian Practitioners who visited the slaughter plants in Mexico reported they were not as poorly operated as previously reported. In response to comment from Commissioner Coe, Dr. Halstead confirmed the department does work with the various animal rescue organizations to help direct people when needed. Racing Commissioner, Christine White, reported MSU is posting on their Website information relative to the various options available and the Michigan Horse Council is considering a food bank for horse owners.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMUNICATION PLAN: Jennifer Holton, Public Information Officer, and Heather Throne, Communications Specialist

Ms. Holton reported part of the FY 2009 communications strategy is to focus on expanding the department's presence outside traditional media outlets, including social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Work on other key areas of focus will include: working to change the perception that agriculture is just cows, plows, and sows, and building the understanding that it is a cutting edge, growing business sector with high tech job opportunities; emphasizing the agri-business sector is important to the long-term diversification of the state's economic base; how MDA serves as a catalyst for expanding the value of business in attracting and retaining jobs; showcasing how Michigan agriculture touches our lives everyday from the food we eat to the milk we drink, etc.; and continuing to communicate our core message – to protect, promote, and preserve.

Communications staff meet regularly with the Public Relations teams at the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) and Agriculture and Natural Resources Communications College at MSU. The goal is to open the lines of communication among those sister agencies and develop ways of partnering to promote the agriculture industry. Commissioner Coe encouraged MDA Communications staff to meet at least monthly with public information staff from MFB and MSU and form a working group to share responsibility for coordinating agriculture's messages.

MDA news releases are sent to a large state-wide audience that includes radio, TV, magazine, weeklies, dailies, MSU Extension, commodity groups, interested stakeholder groups, etc. Currently, the department is also tailoring messages in various new releases to target specific counties or regions.

Ms. Throne noted the Communications staff facilitated monthly visits for the Director with various processors across the state, creating a media event around each visit. Numerous special events were also coordinated this past year, including the first Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verified greenhouse, the Weights and Measures gasoline media events in Williamston and northern Michigan, the Gerber Products Company event, the Michigan Milk Producers expansion event in Ovid, the agriculture disaster tour in Allegan and Ottawa counties, and the cranberry economic announcement in Grand Rapids. In this coming year, plans are underway to implement monthly agriculture business meetings with the Director, coordinate a story on the success of the Julian-Stille Agriculture Innovation Grant Program, develop editorial boards, and coordinate morning radio shows.

Ms. Holton discussed how the social media aspect is being incorporated into the overall communications strategy, including YouTube, Facebook, and MDA Web links posted to Twitter. MDA is leading the charge in this area, being the only State Agency to have Facebook and Twitter accounts being utilized to help promote its industry. The Governor, Lt. Governor, and many legislators have Facebook pages. Podcast interviews are posted on YouTube through MDA's Facebook account, which currently reaches an average of one million households. News releases are also posted on the Twitter and Facebook accounts. Podcast interviews are sent to those radio stations unable to attend MDA events. Social media is definitely the wave of the future and MDA is taking advantage of those avenues to more widely share agriculture's message.

The department has also partnered with the Michigan Film Office. Information will be sent to the commodity groups and agriculture press inviting them to register their properties with the Michigan Film Office, so that when movie production companies are looking for specific types of locations in Michigan, the information is readily available, providing a great opportunity for our agriculture partners.

Commissioner Regis suggested the department contact MSU relative to potentially utilizing resources of the MSU Communications class, whereby student project topics could be focused on agriculture, such as Select Michigan – something that could be beneficial for MDA's Website and various advertising opportunities, as well as students' required class assignments.

FINAL DRAFT OF GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (GAAMP) FOR THE CARE OF FARM ANIMALS: Wayne Whitman, Right to Farm Program Manager; and Professor Janice Swanson, MSU Animal Science, Care of Farm Animals Task Force Chair

Mr. Whitman noted the annual review process requires the Commission review and revise, as considered necessary, the text of seven different GAAMPs and in December, six of those were approved. Today, the Care of Farm Animals GAAMP is presented for consideration.

Dr. Swanson noted the Task Force Committee began their review in March of last year, which entailed a massive overhaul of the Care of Farm Animals GAAMP. She summarized the recommend changes, which included: two new chapters, South American Camelids and Beekeeping and Apiary Management; addition to the overview stating that these are scientifically-derived guidelines and intended to be general farm animal care standards; updates to all chapters with respect to scientific content or practical aspects as specifically applicable; addition of standard statements on euthanasia; addition of references to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines; revisions to reference to the Dead Animal Statute; standardization of headings; and

expansion of references to include Websites. New Committee members included Dr. Angela Butler from MDA with regard to cervids, Dr. Karen Waite from MSU relative to horses, and herself in terms of managing the committee. The committee is working to add representatives from the industry, the animal protection community, and the Sustainable Agriculture Committee prior to the beginning of this year's review process.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE CARE OF FARM ANIMALS GAAMP AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER NORTON SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER REGIS MOVED THE DEPARTMENT SEND A LETTER OF APPRECIATION TO ALL GAAMPs TASK FORCE MEMBERS IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR OUTSTANDING EFFORTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ANNUAL GAAMPs REVIEW PROCESS. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

SAGINAW BAY COASTAL INITIATIVE REPORT: Jim Johnson, Director, Environmental Stewardship Division

Mr. Johnson invited the Commissioners to attend the upcoming fourth Agriculture's Conference on the Environment (ACE) to be held January 28 at the Lansing Center. Over 25 speakers and 12 sessions comprise the day's activities, with the last speaker being the gentleman responsible for the sustainable agriculture purchasing and organic sales within Wal-Mart.

Mr. Johnson advised the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative was refocused over two years ago in an effort to integrate programs with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to address phosphorus issues within Saginaw Bay. He provided a summary report of the committee's organization efforts and recommended action plans. The initiative group identified all of the environmental efforts being coordinated within the Saginaw Bay area and provided that report to the community in August of 2006. This initiative brought together all of the various agencies working on the issues in an attempt to address those issues in a comprehensive manner.

In 2007, MDA worked with MDEQ to identify a number of people to participate in that committee, the intent of which was to have a locally-driven effort utilizing the state/federal resources available to address the challenges identified. MDA's role was to identify farmers, conservation leaders, MFB representatives, Drain Commissioners, Natural Resources Conservation Service representatives, and golf course superintendents in that area. The group adopted a resolution to reduce phosphorus by encouraging other communities to ban the use of phosphorus fertilizer for turf grass in those areas where phosphorus was not

necessary. The resolution also encouraged utilization of educational materials for home owners within the Saginaw Bay area.

Since then, the group has broken into four workgroups: Tourism and Recreation, Beach and Wetlands, Regulatory Improvement, and Projects. At this point, all workgroups are developing recommendations for presentation to the larger committee in March. The agriculture workgroup has submitted a grant proposal to EPA for funding an individual to work with livestock operations within the Saginaw Bay area, as well as a grant for educational efforts with hobby livestock operations.

One very positive result from this effort is that MDA and MDEQ are communicating within that watershed relative to developing a comprehensive approach addressing these agricultural issues, which had not been in place previously.

In response to question from Commissioner Coe, Mr. Johnson advised that, if this effort were to become a template, other watersheds that could be considered are Grand Traverse Bay, St. Joseph (an intrastate watershed), and the Grand River. The challenge in these cases is the large size of these watersheds; therefore, being able to break them down to allow for specific areas of concentration could provide for actual measurable impact.

Commissioner Norton inquired about related provisions in the Farm Bill. Mr. Johnson advised the previous Farm Bill identified targeted watersheds for incentive payments for their continuance, whereby the new Farm Bill changes that effort into nationwide program, providing another sense of incentive for farmers to implement the practices that would qualify them for those payments.

In response to question by Commissioner Norton, Mr. Johnson advised the recommendation to develop a commercial composting facility is indeed feasible and some of that is already happening on a small scale. In today's environment, a greater opportunity exists for this type of facility.

Commissioner Byrum suggested the committee obtain a copy of the Army Corps of Engineers report on the primary sources of phosphorus in that area, adding that this report could provide a significant resource to their effort, primarily because fertilizer is actually number five on the list of phosphorus sources and livestock follows that. Mr. Johnson confirmed the Michigan Department of Health and Public Works representatives were involved in the larger committee and addressed the issue of the inoperable septic systems along the Saginaw Bay and those potential phosphorus sources. Commissioner Byrum expressed concern that agriculture is being targeted when, in fact, they are a small part of the priority in terms of where the problem lies. Mr. Johnson noted that early work of the

committee included reports from various industries identifying the actual challenges.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Commissioner Regis suggested the location of the March 18, 2009, meeting be changed to a room in the Capitol to coincide with "Agriculture Day" events that day and that all legislators be invited to join the meeting. He also suggested a special food drive to assist the food banks be conducted in conjunction with the meeting. This effort could be coordinated with the Food Bank Council, MFB, and perhaps MSU. It was also suggested a press conference on the release of MSU's 2008 Economic Impact of Michigan's Agri-Food System Report could be added to the day's events. The department will pursue the potential of coordinating these efforts.

Commissioner Byrum advised the Commission needs to stay actively involved with the Legislature in the current budget process, emphasizing the department does not have adequate funding to carry out all of its responsibilities and there are things we will need to do differently. To assist the Commission in their efforts to be actively engaged in budget matters, Commissioner Byrum requested they be advised of any State Budget Office proposals that would adversely affect MDA. He offered that special Commission meetings could be convened to address budget issues if needed.

Commissioner Byrum noted there is concern relative to animal welfare issues in light of the recent California Proposition 2 and how those issues could adversely affect Michigan's agriculture industry. This is strictly a political issue and could transcend to other traditional production matters as well.

Because agriculture today offers the only promising economic future for Michigan, Commissioner Byrum encouraged the department to engage in conversation with the State Budget Office relative to the Michigan Department of Economic Development's (MEDC) involvement in agriculture. To further ensure MEDC is responsive to the agriculture sector, Commissioner Coe suggested the department contact the Governor's office to pursue the potential of an officially-appointed representative from the agriculture sector to sit on the MEDC Executive Board.

Commissioner Byrum reported the Michigan Beet Sugar Association, Michigan Bean Shippers Association, and Michigan Bean Commission have transferred their interests in the Saginaw Valley Dry Bean and Sugar Beet Research Farm to MSU, which represents an approximate \$400,000 contribution. MSU has subsequently purchased a new farm, north of Frankenmuth, to establish a new research farm and he noted that no specialty or earmarked appropriations funding will be used to establish the farm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was requested.

ADJOURN

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER ANN JOUSMA-MILLER MOVED TO
ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED.
MOTION CARRIED.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture Commission Meeting Minutes December 9, 2008*
- C) *Michigan's Agri-Food Industry – 2008 A Year of Agri-Economic Success*
- D) *Michigan Department of Agriculture Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for the Care of Farm Animals*
- E) *Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Update*