

**MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE**  
**Kellogg Center**  
**Michigan State University**  
**East Lansing, Michigan 48824**

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MARCH 6, 2007**

**PRESENT:**

James Byrum, Chairperson  
Dale Norton, Vice Chairperson  
Ann Jousma-Miller, Secretary (via teleconference)  
Don Coe, Commission of Agriculture  
Mitch Irwin, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chairperson Byrum called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture to order at 10:03 a.m. on Tuesday, March 6, 2007. Commissioner Jousma-Miller called the roll with Commissioners Byrum, Norton, Coe, Jousma-Miller (via teleconference) and Director Irwin present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 6, 2007 AGENDA. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER COE. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 6, 2007 MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 6, 2007 MEETING MINUTES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting will be held April 12, 2007 at the Lansing Center. In addition to the regular Commission of Agriculture meeting, there will also be a joint meeting with the Natural Resources Commission.

**COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL**

February 7, 2007, Michigan Conservation Summit, Lansing – Commissioner Coe  
February 8, 2007, Seeds of Prosperity Conference, Lansing – Commissioner Coe  
February 19, 2007, Michigan State University Land Policy Institute Conference – Commissioner Coe

March 1-2, 2007, Michigan Wine Industry Annual Meeting, Thompsonville –  
Commissioner Coe

March 21, 2007, Agriculture Day at the Capitol, Lansing – Commissioner Coe

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO APPROVE  
COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER  
JOUSMA-MILLER. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Coe** commented briefly on the conferences he attended. All of them dealt in some way with natural resources and the environment. It is apparent that essential programs and funding that relate to the natural resources and the environment continue to be strained. There is a need for all to continue to support those programs which have been approved by the legislature over the last few years that have to do with agriculture, natural resources and the environment. There are many opportunities as pointed out at the Seeds of Prosperity Conference and Michigan Wine Industry Annual Meeting. Opportunities are coming from the private sector and value-added agriculture and agricultural tourism. There is a need to continue to create a business climate in the state that will give the private sector, as they come forward and develop business opportunities, a level playing field against other states and opportunities to build on their investments.

**Commissioner Norton** commented about the conferences he has recently attended. He noted that he moderated the final session of the Agriculture Conference on the Environment (ACE) and introduced David Cole. He also attended the Michigan Pork Producers Meeting and Symposium; the Michigan Cattlemen's Association Meeting, where they discussed their by-laws and resolutions; traveled to Cancun on a trip sponsored by North Central Co-op; attended the National Pork Board Meeting in Los Angeles, California and made a presentation on his trip to Denmark on alternative sow housing; and traveled to Lansing to hear Bruce Knight discuss the Farm Bill.

He noted that the Michigan Department of Transportation is becoming concerned in the Bronson area about the level of traffic expected with ethanol plants. He said a local mill has offered to put up storage bins for free if delivery is guaranteed to their mill when they want it. It is an unusual set up. It is a way to keep the corn on the farm and supply the ethanol plants when needed.

**Commissioner Jousma-Miller** noted that since last month's meeting the telephone calls have stopped. She has gotten good feedback on the Agriculture Tourism Report from legislators and from a television interview that she gave.

She has been working closely with Dick VandeBunte, who is on the Renewable Fuels Commission. He, along with Pete Madden, have been guest speakers for economic clubs in Marquette and Escanaba. Mr. VandeBunte was also a speaker at the Menominee County Soil Conservation District where he talked about bioenergy.

The Michigan Society of American Foresters will be meeting in the Upper Peninsula and their statewide meeting will be about biomass utilization. The Logging Congress will also be held in Escanaba later in the year.

On March 16, Director Irwin will be the guest speaker in Escanaba at the Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference. There will also be a conversation with Director Irwin about the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds.

**Commissioner Byrum** noted his concern about the amount of fertilizer that will need to move between now and planting. There is concern that a “staggered” spring will be needed to start in the south and move north in a predictable fashion otherwise there will be problems getting nutrients where needed.

There are still seeing acreage shifts with corn commanding many acres. They are seeing some increase in prices for other commodities to gain back acres but most have already decided what to plant.

Michigan Agri-Business Association will be putting together agronomy sessions this summer.

He commented about his recent trip to Washington, DC where he met with members of the Michigan Congressional delegation, Secretary of Agriculture and others about agriculture issues and the Farm Bill. He will be returning to Washington for additional visits.

Regarding ethanol, he stated that focus is shifting to cellulosic ethanol and the development of a model for collection, handling, and processing of biomass for cellulosic ethanol production. There is a group forming a bioeconomy caucus to help move issues forward related to ethanol, but also industrial commercial uses of cellulosic derived or developed materials from fine chemicals to various other products. The caucus will probably have close to 60 members. It will be a broad based and bi-partisan.

He noted that last year Michigan shipped 120 million bushels to other users. By the end of 2009, we will have to keep it all here.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Irwin noted that MDA has been in the middle of the budget process. Staff has presented to both the House and Senate (Standing and Appropriations Committees) and will be back repeatedly. Issues continue to be the same challenges and he thanked the Commissioners for their support of MDA.

Director Irwin discussed a meeting held with all interested staff in person or via teleconference to share information about budget issues. It went well and will be done again to keep staff involved and updated. Even though there are challenges ahead, staff has been asked to participate in finding opportunities and ideas on how we can make changes that result in reducing unnecessary costs, becoming more efficient and making sure we have funding for our core mission and priorities. Included are changes in travel, memberships, contract services and other administrative expenditures.

He thanked Commissioner Jousma-Miller and Jeanne Lipe for submitting the Agricultural Tourism Commission Report to the Legislature. There were three major findings in terms of signage, promotion and a model zoning ordinance. Outreach is beginning done with no additional resources from the legislature because we believe it is a high priority.

Director Irwin noted that it has been reported to the Legislature that any unfunded mandates (issues pertaining to item pricing, diesel fuel inspection, agriculture tourism type legislation or anything other mandates that have no resources to do the work) will be addressed to the best of our ability. We cannot continue to take on new priorities with no additional resources. We will have to prioritize as best we can.

Director Irwin briefly discussed the Conservation Summit. It was important to bring Agriculture, resource groups, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to look at long-term funding for resource agencies. MDA represents one of the stronger growth patterns in the state's diversity in our economy program at yet account for less than one percent of the state's budget.

Two things are occurring; mobilizing forces for more resources in the budget currently underway and potential for a ballot question in 2008 to dedicate resources to cleaning up contamination, funds for state parks and infrastructure for tourism and hunting, and agriculture efforts in land use and preservation.

There was much interest in animal identification at the Seeds of Prosperity Conference. He noted the speaker at the ACE Conference was thought provoking.

He commented briefly about the NASDA meeting he attended in Washington. Focus was primarily the Farm Bill. The four priorities areas for NASDA parallel Michigan's priorities: more equity for specialty crops, renewable fuels, conservation and nutrition.

Undersecretary Bruce Knight will be recognizing those states that pursued animal identification. One area he pledged to pursue was a targeted effort of premium beef cuts in the Asian market.

He commented briefly about a group from California producing a PBS documentary (Heartland America series) about ethanol production in the Midwest. They toured the Woodbury facility and conducted interviews. Their biggest question was what will happen in 20 or 30 years with farmland preservation issues.

Other meetings held include those with some of the major oil companies and their activities in Michigan.

He briefly noted issues with the Renewable Fuels Commission including concepts moving toward alternatives that have more promise than corn based ethanol. Additionally, one of the major initiatives that the legislature will be working on this year is to focus \$100 million on alternatives energy sources such as wind energy, renewable energy, battery powered energy and enhanced solar energy. Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) will be working on this.

Commissioner Norton noted that pork producers also have resolutions pending regarding that issue.

Director Irwin stated we are doing a lot of in-house review in terms of responding to the budget stress, the executive orders, and budget cuts to come.

**DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL:**

- No new out of state travel planned.

**Anhydrous Ammonia Safety and Security Practices (AASSPs) Update: Kenneth Rauscher, Director, Pesticide & Plant Pest Management Division and April Hunt, Agri-Chemical Coordinator, Pesticide & Plant Pest Management Division**

(Chairperson Byrum recused himself as the association that he represents specifically asked for the legislation that requires these practices and turned the gavel over to Commissioner Norton, Vice Chairperson.) Mr. Rauscher briefly reviewed the background for the AASSPs. Ms. Hunt explained that the taskforce was put together and with input from local and state law enforcement, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Agri-Business

Association and other interested stakeholders, the proposed seven practices were developed. The workgroup is in full support of these practices and she formally asked for final approval. Once approved, the practices will be publicized.

Commissioner Coe asked if there had been an opportunity for public comment or for interested groups to provide comment. Ms. Hunt stated that opportunities had been offered through the workgroup, emails, newsletters and websites .

In response to a question from Commissioner Norton, Ms. Hunt stated that complying with these practices will offer the farmer protection against liability. There was a brief discussion about the reduction in use of anhydrous ammonia.

In response to a question from Commissioner Coe, Ms. Hunt stated that the number of methamphetamine labs has been cut in half mainly because of pseudoephedrine legislation in December of 2005, although the use of methamphetamine is on the rise.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED THAT THE ANHYDROUS AMMONIA SAFETY AND SECURITY PRACTICES (AASSPs) BE ADOPTED. COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Hunt noted that outreach will begin immediately.

Commissioner Byrum noted that the AASSPs are voluntary, but by adopting the practices will receive liability protection.

(Commissioner Norton returned the gavel to Commissioner Byrum.)

#### **RETIREMENT RESOLUTION FOR ROSEMARY WILLIAMS**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED THAT THE RESOLUTION FOR ROSEMARY WILLIAMS BE ADOPTED WITH BEST WISHES FOR A LONG AND HEALTHY RETIREMENT. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION FUND BOARD APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS: Gordon Wenk, Director, Environmental Stewardship Division**

Mr. Wenk presented the recommendations for this round of community projects to be supported with the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund.

This year's application cycle was unusual in that a portion of the funds awarded were from the USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), with the remainder coming from the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund. The FRPP portion of the funds is \$991,414.67. The Agricultural Preservation Fund portion is \$508,125.00

On February 21, 2007, the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund Board (Fund Board) voted to award grants to six community purchase of development rights programs. The communities selected were Eaton County, Kent County, Washtenaw County, Barry County, Van Buren County and Scio Township in Washtenaw County. The total amount recommended to be awarded is \$1,499,538.67. More than 749 acres of farmland will be preserved with this grant award. \$11 million in total was requested from eleven communities representing 3,800 acres.

In order to move forward with the process the recommendation must be approved by both the Fund Board and the Commission of Agriculture approval.

Mr. Wenk thanked Rich Harlow and staff for their hard work in reviewing all the applications.

Commissioner Coe stated that this is absolutely ridiculous. He stated that there is no alternative but to vote for the funding. However in his county, one of the smallest in the state, they are losing eight acres a day of farmland. That's 2,800 acres a year in farmland. While the funding available is appreciated, it makes no progress toward preserving farmland. This program should be ten or fifty times the size it is to be meaningful to preserve farming as a viable part of the community. He commended the staff and noted how frustrating it must be to have so much in requests and so little in awards.

Commissioner Norton noted that a neighboring farm recently sold eight acres in Ohio to pay for 120 acres in Michigan. He agreed with Commissioner Coe that more funding is needed for the program.

Commissioner Byrum stated that municipalities need to change their processes and the State of Michigan needs to change their policy overall to discourage green development, encourage brownfield development and reinvest in the center cities and urban center.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER NORTON MOVED TO CONCUR WITH THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION FUND BOARD OF FEBRUARY 21, 2007 TO AWARD GRANTS TO SIX LOCAL PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS**

**PROGRAMS. COMMISSIONER COE SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. (SEE ATTACHMENT F.)**

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT: Liesl Clark, Legislative Liaison**

Ms. Clark commented that with the new legislature, the focus has been on education and meeting the new legislators. She updated the Commissioners on upcoming committee meetings, in both the House and Senate, and discussed priority issues.

She reviewed the status of several pending bills.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the USDA proposal to eliminate the exclusion of planting of fruits and vegetables on base acres. Commissioner Byrum noted that specialty crops need to be recognized. A brief discussion regarding a proposed Commission resolution ensued. No action was proposed.

Commissioner Norton noted a concern he has been hearing about there not being an animal title in the next Farm Bill. The concern is about sow stalls. Additional discussion ensued regarding sow stalls.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**E.J. Brown**, Michigan Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, gave an update on the fair industry in Michigan and their new board of directors.

He noted that the A.J. Carl Shows (a carnival) has gone out of business in December 2006. That affected seven fairs and six festivals. With some rescheduling, everything has been worked out.

The new brochures and membership directories will be available in a couple of weeks.

**COMMISSIONERS' ISSUES**

**Commissioner Norton** discussed the PQA Plus Program. The Swine Welfare Committee that he serves on has been involved with the development of the program. It is an attempt to assure customers that good swine welfare is taking place at the farm level. It is a certification and assessment program. The Pork Quality Assurance Program (PQA) was implemented by the pork industry in 1995 to address and eliminate sulfa residue issues. The Swine Welfare Assurance Program was developed to do similar things related to swine welfare. After discussions with customers, the decision was made to roll the Swine Welfare Assurance Program into PQA and call it PQA Plus. There will be a random audit of a small percentage of facilities to verify and assure customers that good welfare is taking place.



He also commented about certain commodity prices increasing. He noted that green beans have increased their tonnage dollars about 20 percent in order to try and attract acreage. The low linoleic acid soybeans have a current premium of \$.55. He noted in his business they have decided to raise more of this crop.

Commissioner Norton also voiced concern about the lack of a new commissioner appointment.

Commissioner Coe distributed copies of an article from the Lansing State Journal about the 30 percent shortage of workers within Michigan during that last harvest period. He noted that Michigan Works and MDA are doing what they can to recruit agricultural workers from Texas and other places, but the 400 or 500 workers that result are no where close to handling the need for 90,000 migrant workers in Michigan. We are simply competing with other states. The reality is the processing is so difficult to bring in workers from out of country. The policing actions being taken under the name of national security are so onerous that it is difficult to attract workers to Michigan. He stated that we need to send a clear message to the federal government that we expect them to work on immigration reform and most specifically, to work on the agriculture jobs bills that are in front of the House and Senate. He introduced a suggested resolution relative to agricultural workers and read it into the record (Attachment I.)

He stated that it is not too early to send a message of support to Congress for the AgJOBS bill. Even if Congress acts quickly, it is unlikely there will be help for the next harvest season. There is a sense of urgency in asking Congress to work quickly.

Director Irwin commented that the NASDA staff had been asked to prepare a concept resolution. Other state's commissions are also now considering a resolution. This is part of the overall immigration package. It speaks to the critical need for migrant seasonal workers addressing some of the needs of states like Michigan, California and others. A full analysis of the bills has been requested.

Ms. Clark noted that she has been in contact with Representative Conyers and Senator Stabenow's offices. She is expecting support within the next week. Contact with Representative Walberg's office is pending.

Commissioner Jousma-Miller commented that Colorado and other states are experiencing the same frustration and problems with the lack of labor. In Colorado, they are starting to use low risk prisoners to help work in the fields.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER JOUSMA-MILLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE RECOMMENDATION FOR RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY COMMISSIONER COE. STAFF WILL ADD LANGUAGE TO MAKE THE RESOLUTION MORE MICHIGAN SPECIFIC BY HIGHLIGHTING MICHIGAN COMMODITIES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER NORTON. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Commissioner Byrum noted that mandatory animal identification was effective March 1, 2007. He also noted that Minnesota is now interested in the implementation of animal identification and wants to talk to Michigan staff.

Commissioner Norton noted that the National Pork Board and the National Pork Producers Council are very supportive and passed resolutions of support at their national meetings.

In response to a question from Commissioner Norton, Director Irwin stated that markets would provide animal identification tags for those cattle that arrived at market without one at a slightly higher cost.

Ms. Clark noted that over 900,000 tags have been purchased out of 1 million head of cattle in Michigan.

Director Irwin noted an upcoming meeting about boutique spirits.

Commissioner Byrum commented that he had heard there would be an animal title in the Farm Bill. There was a brief discussion about cost of feed, environmental regulations and the possibility of forcing animal and poultry production out of the United States.

**PUBLIC COMMENT (continued):**

**Ann Louise Budd**, Michigan Horse Council (MHC), shared information about the upcoming International Stallion Exhibition and Trade Show, Horse Expo '07. Next year will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the show and 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Michigan Horse Council. The Expo brings a great economic impact to the community. The Office of the Racing Commissioner's Horse of the Year will be recognized at a reception Saturday night.

She encouraged the Department to complete the equine survey. Half of the money has already been allocated and spent. This is a big industry in Michigan.

She updated the Commission on issues at the Livestock Pavilion and other activities the Michigan Horse Council is involved with including the Youth Racing Program, equestrian team and 4-H scholarships and grant trails program.

The MHC is recognizing Dr. Dave Hawkins with a Catalyst Award. Dr. Hawkins is retiring from MSU's Department of Animal Science and has been a big help to the industry. Also being recognized will be Chris Skelly, MSU Equine Specialist.

She encourage continued follow-up with Lyme disease as it is deadly if left untreated.

Commissioner Coe acknowledged Senator Hildenbrand's bill that considers horse breeding or any horse facility as an agricultural process and therefore not subject to 18 mil levy. Horse property owners should be encouraged to take advantage of that.

Commissioner Coe noted that Black Star Farms has been holding clinics for law enforcement horses, training them for combat.

### **ADJOURN**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Attachments:

*A – Agenda*

*B – Agriculture Commission Meeting Minutes February 6, 2007*

*C – Director's Report*

*D – Memo dated February 27, 2007 regarding Anhydrous Ammonia Safety and Security Practices (AASSPs)*

*E – Retirement Resolution for Rosemary Williams*

*F – Possible Motion to Approve the Grant Awards for the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund*

*G – Legislative Status March 2007*

*H – Public Comment: Michigan Association of Fairs & Exhibitions 2007 Executive Committee and Board of Directors*

*I – Commissioners' Issues: AgJOBS Draft Resolution and copy of Lansing State Journal article entitled "Labor shortage hurting Mich. Farmers" submitted by Commissioner Coe*