

# MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Trinosophes  
1464 Gratiot Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48237

## MEETING MINUTES JUNE 12, 2013

### **PRESENT:**

Bob Kennedy, Chairperson, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Diane Hanson, Vice Chairperson, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Trevor Meachum, Secretary, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Don Coe, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Jamie Clover Adams, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

### **ABSENT (EXCUSED):**

Fred Walcott, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

### **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chairperson Kennedy called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:08 a.m. on June 12, 2013. Commissioner Meachum called the roll with Commissioners Coe, Hanson, Kennedy, and Meachum, and Director Clover Adams present. Commissioner Walcott was excused from the meeting.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR JUNE 12, 2013. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANSON. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **APPROVAL OF APRIL 10, 2013, MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioner Coe noted a correction to the April 10 minutes under his comments on the first page; he met with Natural Resources Commission member Tim Nichols instead of Chair Richardson.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER COE MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 10, 2013, MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MEACHUM. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting will be held on July 16, at the Geagely Laboratory, 1615 S. Harrison Road, East Lansing.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL**

**Commissioner Coe** advised the fruit crops in the Traverse City area are progressing well, but a later than normal harvest is anticipated. The agri-tourism business is beginning somewhat late due to the cooler spring weather.

The April 26 Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) event celebrated all of the wineries on Old Mission Peninsula becoming MAEAP certified. The Governor and the Director were present to assist in recognition of that accomplishment. On May 23, Central Michigan University's Agriculture Agri-tourism staff toured Black Star Farms, which resulted in good coverage in the Detroit media about the agriculture sector.

He joined a meeting with Jason Rowntree, from Michigan State University (MSU), on May 29 to discuss the Pasture-Raised Livestock Program. He also attended several meetings as a member of the Traverse City Chamber Economic Development Corporation and a number of food hub meetings to address the various difficulties initiating a food hub in the Traverse City area. Last week, he joined many others from the State of Michigan for various briefings with Congressman Benishek. Their meeting primarily focused on the Immigration Reform Bill and what is needed in the new Farm Bill. On May 11-13, he and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Grape and Wine Program Manager Linda Jones were in Washington, D.C., for the Wine America Meeting. They spent two days lobbying the offices of the Michigan Congressional Delegation to focus on the Farm Bill and agriculture labor issues.

The Leelanau County Commission unfortunately has voted to disband their economic development efforts. Before his group could actually present regarding the benefits of economic development efforts, the Commission was approached regarding words used in that presentation, such as planning, collaborative, regional, and sustainable, which are part of the United Nations Agenda 21 Proposal that warns any such actions should be voted down by anyone believing in the American way. As a result, the Commission voted on the basis of believing economic development would force people off from agricultural land, to use only public transportation, etc. Because the Agenda 21 proponents are well organized, this anti-government movement has become a very real issue in many public meetings.

**Commissioner Hanson** hosted a breakfast that MDARD staff Mike DiBernardo and Nancy Nyquist attended, along with members from Delta County Economic Development and Farm Bureau to discuss business development issues. On May 7, she joined the department-hosted Strategic Growth Initiative session in Marquette.

The new administrator for the Michigan State University (MSU) Upper Peninsula (UP) Research and Extension Center in Chatham began on May 20.

Weather in the UP has been unseasonably cold and without much sun, which has delayed planting and may affect harvest as well.

**Commissioner Meachum** advised corn and soybeans are entirely planted in southwest Michigan. Tree fruits and vegetables all look good, with the strawberry harvest having

begun yesterday. Because there was no crop for workers to harvest when they arrived in Michigan, most of those workers left for work elsewhere. This has created an issue with labor in southwest Michigan.

Growers are concerned about the status of the Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center (SWMREC). Growers and SWMREC staff met last week with Dean Fred Poston, Doug Buhler, and Steve Lovejoy from MSU to discuss the future of extension and experiment stations in Michigan. Many stations are at a critical point budget-wise, not having money even for utilities. The cherry and apple growers are considering an initiative whereby the growers would tax themselves to raise funds to help support the MSU Experiment Stations.

On July 22-23, the Horticulture Society and the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association (MACMA) are hosting an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tour in southwest Michigan for local legislators and officials from Washington.

**Commissioner Kennedy** attended the April 24 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Listening Session hosted by MDARD, which was an excellent session that addressed concerns around the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). He joined the Governor's Timber Summit on April 26 with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and MDARD that focused on how to economically drive the timber business in Michigan. Last Saturday, he met with Congressman Benishek, during which their session focused on the potential for expansion of agriculture in the UP and the northern Lower Peninsula.

Planting of soybeans in central Michigan has just now been completed. It has been a challenge, and corn is very small at this point. There was a small window in May that allowed for planting, which in today's world is possible to accomplish in just a week.

In addition to travel previously mentioned, Commissioners Coe, Hanson, Kennedy, 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 HANSON. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Clover Adams traveled to the Netherlands in April with a group of west Michigan business people and the Lieutenant Governor. The very informative trip focused on various opportunities around exports, the greenhouse industry, and best practices to assist producers.

The 75-80 people attending the Governor's Timber Summit helped the agencies focus as a state on timber resources and actions needed to improve timber harvest and the environmental and wildlife benefits that result in better managing that resource. This dove-tails nicely with the Governor's signed legislation that moves the management of private forestlands into MDARD in October, leaving MDNR to focus on state forestlands.

The FDA Listening Session gave the agriculture industry a good opportunity for growers to ask questions regarding FSMA and help clarify its implications, as well as for Michigan to educate FDA on some of the unique aspects of growing in this state. The comment period has been extended to September and the department continues to work with FDA on those requirements that won't work for Michigan growers, in particular irrigation water and wildlife.

MDARD is working with the Michigan Department of Environment Quality (MDEQ) on the Wetlands Legislation. Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) worked with MDEQ to develop a bill that would fit their policy and this legislation represents a good compromise.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is tightening its requirements on Pure Michigan branding, finding that combining of logos is diluting the Pure Michigan brand. The combined logos developed for the apple industry and the Grape and Wine Industry Council will continue, but the others will be phased out. The use of Pure Michigan Agriculture and the Pure Michigan logo will continue.

In the final budget proposal, the Strategic Growth Initiative is funded by \$1 million in MDARD's budget and \$2 million from the budget of MEDC. This is a great opportunity to continue fostering our working relationship with MEDC. Mike Finney, MEDC President and CEO, has been very helpful in finalizing this funding.

The Animal Industry Division (AID) has reorganized, reconstituting the Division Director and State Veterinarian into one position. Dr. James Averill will serve in that position. AID is reorganized into ruminants and non-ruminants, and Jim Bowes will serve as the Division Deputy Director, managing the administrative side of the division. Dr. Steve Halstead will be free to use his talents to coordinate with animal agriculture and MSU to help move the animal industry forward.

She greatly appreciated the opportunity to visit with Congressman Benishek recently and brief him on Michigan's agriculture industry. The department will continue to foster that relationship.

On Monday, she joined Senator Hansen for a very interesting tourism event in Oceana County, on which they rode their bicycles 16.8 miles. It was very evident how agri-tourism is adding tremendous value to the tourism industry in Michigan.

#### **DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL**

Director Clover Adams requested approval for travel to Medora, North Dakota, June 20-24 for the Midwest Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

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

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Ms. Laura Barbier**, from **New Baltimore**, advised that through verbiage in her local ordinance, she is able to have backyard chickens under the listing of "pets," and her neighbors have been agreeable. A fellow New Baltimore resident was rejected by the

City Council to begin a business of raising eggs for sale. In the meantime, Ms. Barbier advised she is concerned she may lose her pets because city officials are requiring she move her pens. At this point, she does not know where to turn with the situation.

**Ms. Michelle Brenjak**, from **New Baltimore**, advised she attempted to have the city ordinance changed to allow for her intent to sell eggs. The City Council refused her request, the reasons for which she feels were not based in fact. In researching the Right to Farm (RTF) Act, she found numerous cases have been won in different municipalities. She is moving forward in her effort. She feels the growing population could be sustainable through individuals having the ability to provide for their own food.

**Ms. Kathryn Underwood**, from the **City of Detroit Planning Commission**, shared with the Commission copies of the City of Detroit's recently approved Urban Agriculture Ordinance, which became effective April 16, 2013, about which the growers are very excited. Moving forward, they need to implement the process for people to purchase land and obtain permits for agriculture as primary use. They are also addressing details of acknowledging non-conforming status that results from exclusion from the Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices (GAAMPs). With assistance from growers, they are developing documents that will explain the ordinance in easy-to-understand language. Because chickens, bees, and other farm animals are being kept within the City of Detroit, their next goal is to develop an ordinance that will facilitate that practice through coordination with MDARD, MSU, and the community. She expressed appreciation to MDARD, the Commission, and Rich Harlow and Bridget Patrick for their invaluable participation in the Urban Agriculture Workgroup. In response to inquiry from Commissioner Kennedy, Ms. Underwood advised the Planning Commission hopes to convene the group on the animal ordinance within the next month; however, because of their current financial situation, the future timeline is unknown. Commissioner Coe suggested Detroit work with MDARD and MSU to help Detroit's community gardens become even more productive; and that they could look to what the Traverse City area has accomplished in the area of animal agriculture. Ms. Underwood advised their challenge will be the gap between community/backyard operations and full-scale farms, and Michigan has an opportunity to create some innovation around urban agriculture.

**Wendy Banka**, from **Ann Arbor**, now has three chickens and one rooster in a city that allows chickens, but relies on the RTF Act to permit her rooster, allowing her to raise and sell chicks as her commercial operation. She hopes to be MAEAP verified in the near future, a process that is helping to improve her operation. The Michigan Small Farm Council (MSFC) is now a legally recognized state organization and as such, would like to be invited to participate on various task forces to help move small farms forward. Yesterday, she attended a training meeting in Howell for local zoning officials on RTF and how that applies to local ordinances. When contacting MDARD, she and others are usually advised they are not covered by RTF. During the meeting it was noted that in reviewing the law and the court cases, they found very little room for ordinances to supersede RTF; if a farming operation is commercial and one follows the GAAMPs, RTF protection applies; the decision made through the 2012 GAAMPs is unclear and open to question; and that MDARD's position is not in line or consistent with the court cases.

Director Clover Adams advised the department consults with the state's Assistant Attorney Generals who have advised MDARD is following the law. Different opinions may exist; however, RTF is not a right to do whatever is wanted in the name of farming – it is a presumption that you are not a nuisance – there is a technical difference. Until the advice from the Attorney General's Office is overturned by the courts, it is the law of the land, and the department will follow that law and the counsel of its attorneys.

**Randy Zeilinger**, from **Garden City**, advised he is pleased to announce that his operation is now MAEAP verified. On another note, he was convicted in criminal court for keeping chickens in Garden City and is currently on probation. He has filed for an appeal, but fears that if his charge stands, it would have implications statewide. Additionally, a trial for the other MAEAP verified farming operation in Garden City continues on June 26. He is concerned by this aggressive action and has heard reports of other cities across the state actively removing agricultural activities, which is counter to the agriculture industry we are trying to grow. The situation needs to be converted into positive involvement for agriculture in these areas. Everyone has to start somewhere and MSFC members simply want that opportunity and need support and consistent advice at the state level. If there is anything that MSFC can do to assist, please let them know.

#### **BUDGET UPDATE: Gordon Wenk, Chief Deputy Director**

Mr. Wenk advised Ms. Tyszkiewicz is participating today in hearings in the House and Senate regarding key legislation.

The Fiscal Year 2014 budget has been forwarded to the Governor for consideration. Thanks to good work on the part of the Governor and the Legislature, the budget was again completed early in the year, which is beneficial to MDARD planning-wise.

The Governor and Legislature recognized the department's accomplishments through a 12.4 percent increase in its General Fund/General Purpose funding level. That increase includes \$1 million for the Food and Agriculture Strategic Growth Initiative, which combines with the \$2 million from MEDC for that effort. Additional dollars were allotted to the Office of Agriculture Development (AgD) for a new staff person who most likely will focus on forestry and forest products. The Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division (PPCMD) received \$1.8 million, of which \$800,000 is one-time funding to maintain their programs and stabilize commitments to the industry for inspections of agricultural products. Another one-time funding of \$300,000 will provide for the Ottawa County Water Resource Study, which will address the salinity problem in that area, results of which will have a broader application across the state.

The Qualified Forest Affidavit Program received \$1.7 million in one-time funding to support that program as it assists private landowners in management of their forest lands and increase the timber production in the state. Long term, this new program for the department should be self-funding.

The Fiscal Year 2015 budget process begins in August. Funding issues, similar to that in PPCMD, will be addressed in other divisions. Mere momentum carried divisions

through the lean budget years, but programs must now be brought back up to levels that will allow the department to continue providing high-level customer service.

In response to Commissioner Coe regarding concerns about the Farmland Preservation Program, Mr. Wenk advised current legislation would give the department additional spending authority to correct the funding source for administration of the program. The bottom line is that the program is funded by people paying their liens; however, as land increasingly remains in farming, lien payment is not required for transfer to another use, and revenue generated is insufficient for maintaining the program, which manages 45,000 contracts. It is an important program and another funding mechanism must be developed, as well as consideration of what needs to be initiated for the long term. The Director noted as program revenue decreases, staff are adjusted to maintain operations within funding levels. Conversations begin next month with the community to develop ideas for funding the operations piece of the program.

Regarding the recent Food and Dairy Division audit, she noted department staff are focused on the customer and the Governor is encouraging us to set high goals and expectations. On the other hand, the Auditor General took exception where we did not meet those high expectations. They inaccurately implied that Michigan's food was unsafe, when in fact the department did thoroughly inspect each location; we simply did not meet our high goals. It does highlight a need for more inspectors in the Food and Dairy Program. There are 20 more milk manufacturing plants than three years ago, and we are all working to grow food processing, which will require additional inspectors.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM UPDATE: Mike DiBernardo, Grant/Economic Development Specialist, Nancy Nyquist, Market Development Specialist, and Jodi Gruner, Economic/Community Development Analyst, Office of Agriculture Development**

Mr. DiBernardo reported the Agriculture Economic Development team identified the best opportunity to grow the industry is looking at stage one and stage two companies. Stage one companies are less than ten employees, less than \$1 million of business, and those developing packaging techniques, pricing, and market share. Stage two companies have about ten employees, over \$1 million in business, and face several growth challenges. Stage three companies are those such as Gerber, Kellogg, and Request Foods – those who have staff and resources. MEDC is assisting those stage three companies with their business challenges.

A triage process has been identified for business development to identify requesters' needs and establish how best to move forward – whether a referral to help build a solid business plan or develop a marketing plan. For stage two companies, a key area for growth is supply chain and staff work with companies to enhance that, such as co-packing and regional food supply systems. The focus is on identifying the gap and enhancing the system to address that gap.

A strategic plan outline was developed to demonstrate how the triage process operates and to identify goals and objectives. The key objective with new leads is to contact the respective local economic development office and other appropriate partners.

Business development opportunities in Scott Corin's region include three large projects. The Aquaculture Workforce will complete work soon identifying regulatory recommendations between MDARD, MDEQ, and MDNR. Further, MDARD has agreed to vet aquaculture projects before they go to MEDC. This will lead to a clear path for the industry to move forward. In response to question from Commissioner Kennedy, Mr. DiBernardo advised projections for the aquaculture industry are from a \$500 million to a \$1 billion industry over time and there is tremendous opportunity. The Director added many regulatory obstacles still remain and the department is collaborating with the other agencies to progress in that regard.

The second initiative, on which Mr. Corin is meeting today, is an agreement with the Dairy Farmers of America in Cass City. This phase one is a \$40 million investment, representing 25 new jobs that will create a dairy processing plant in Cass City. This is crucial, because the majority of product from that area is being shipped out of state for processing. MDARD committed with the local officials to complete facilitation of all three phases of the project. As we grow the dairy industry, the next step is expanding processing capacity.

Through the department's partnership with Detroit (Detroit Economic Development Corporation, MEDC, and Detroit Eastern Market), the third initiative is an agreement with VernDale Dairy to renovate an abandoned processing plant to provide for a second plant to process high-end milk products for the chocolate industry. This will increase processing by three to five million pounds of milk on an annual basis.

These are examples of the important collaborative/partnership efforts that bring growth projects to fruition – they are critical to the local economic development opportunity. The state is at a significant threshold in beginning to build capacity.

Relative to activities on the west side of the state, Ms. Gruner advised the connectivity across the regions has identified the objectives, resources available, and areas needing assistance which has led to an enhanced relationship with MEDC. Toward food safety and FSMA, efforts have been underway to ensure Michigan's food and dairy issues are on the forefront of what they are considering with food safety.

A pilot connectivity initiative was initiated with food inspectors on the west side to help capture information on those companies poised for growth and identify areas where AgD staff could assist. A comprehensive informational packet was developed that includes various resources and guides for growing a business. This effort has been very successful, which will be a potential initiative for adoption by inspection staff in other areas of the state.

Supply chain is a key issue for growing companies and work is focusing on identifying co-manufacturing and co-packing opportunities, as well as technology and logistics needs. To help manage all of the requests for that assistance and connecting to those who might be able to fulfill those needs, various systems are being explored. Salesforce is a software program that offers a good management tool and AgD staff are currently working within MEDC's system, which allows creation of cases to provide the cross-reference tracking to manage activities and opportunities. The system will provide

valuable historical information about a company before staff meets with them to enhance that first engagement. A full tracking and reporting tool will also be used to produce periodic summaries.

Commissioner Coe noted to help more business opportunities obtain funding they need, the department could assist in validation to the lending institutions that there is capacity for agricultural growth. Mr. DiBernardo advised AgD would be happy to assist and have already started down that path.

Ms. Nyquist reported staff has processed the second progress reports for the Value-Added Agriculture Food Hub Food System Grants. By in large, most of them are on track or ahead of schedule in their processes.

There also is good success in the food hub world. However, some are having struggles and staff are working to provide resources to assist. Also, improvements in the program for the coming year are being developed. Communities continually express interest in implementing a food hub or food system.

For 2013, the Specialty Crop Block Grant budget is just over \$1.2 million and 43 applications were received. The department will be recommending 17 of those projects, application to FDA is due early July, and the refinement process follows to ensure projects meet FDA requirements. Final recipients will be announced in October.

The Director added the department is exploring the use of MSU's grant system as a way to manage grants. Ms. Nyquist advised that capability would greatly improve efficiency of MDARD's current system.

**AGRICULTURAL PROCESSING RENAISSANCE ZONE UPDATE: Mike DiBernardo, Grant/Economic Development Specialist, Office of Agriculture Development**

Since the topic is ongoing, the Commission recommended deferring the presentation to the July meeting.

**STRATEGIC GROWTH INITIATIVE UPDATE: Mike DiBernardo, Grant/Economic Development Specialist, Office of Agriculture Development**

Since this project is also ongoing, the Commission recommended deferring the presentation to the July meeting.

**RECESS AND RECONVENE**

Chairperson Kennedy recessed the meeting at 11:10 a.m. for a brief break. He reconvened the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

**DETROIT EASTERN MARKET OVERVIEW: Dan Carmody, President, Detroit Eastern Market Corporation**

Mr. Carmody advised it was a pleasure to welcome the Commission to the Eastern Market over the last two days. The market's goal is to create the nation's most inclusive, resilient, and robust regional food hub. He thanked the Commission and the department for their tremendous support over the last few years to begin working in that direction.

At the heart of Eastern Market is a six-block public market that has been feeding Detroit since 1891. Two products are sold – food and communality. It is several markets, including a year-around Saturday regional market, the Tuesday seasonal market, and next year, debut of a Sunday market.

When speaking of food systems, two keen aspects are being addressed – improving food access for those residents with poor access to good food and the relationship of that access to skyrocketing rates of diet-related diseases. The other aspect is re-localization of Detroit's food economy. We need to help bring some of those smaller farmers up to scale to increase that portion of the food production chain. The role for Eastern Market is improving food access and improving the local food economy to grow jobs and wealth. To accomplish these goals, they focus on processing, distribution, and retailing. They work with numerous community partners on production, consumer education, grower education, and converting waste to nutrients.

The market typically has 250 vendors this time of year and most come from the collar counties around the Detroit metro regions. Throughout the year, growers come from all corners of the state, as well as Ontario and northern Ohio. The Saturday traffic reaches up to 40,000 visitors during peak seasons. The 40-50 grower wholesale market attracts all of the independent grocers and small-scale food distributors that don't have a dedicated food chain supplier.

In Detroit, there has been an explosion of interest in community gardening. The larger growers come under the "Grown in Detroit" sellers' co-op and have already seen the emergence of three of those growers into their own full-time businesses.

Much conversation is focusing on indoor production, in particular, the repurposing of old buildings in creating vertical growing systems. MSU's Greening Institute intends to lead that development. Many of Detroit's food processors are considering integrating their production into food system schemes to protect their supplies.

Eastern Market Corporation assumed responsibility for operation of the market from the City in 2006, overseeing about \$15 million in new investment, with Shed 2 and Shed 3 now completed. Shed 5 is currently under renovation and will include a shared-use community kitchen. This is the pivotal project for the market, as it will accelerate the growing of food businesses. Collectively with MDARD, that can ultimately lead to expediting those who will grow and create meaningful jobs. He shared the inspiring growth stories of several local food businesses in Detroit. The kitchen will also provide the capability to expose more high-school age youth to career opportunities in food.

Four major projects constitute their 2016 vision. The Food Accelerator Project is the next major piece and they are working with Mr. DiBernardo to repurpose a 104,000 square-foot vacant building into a facility with a 50,000 square-foot food processor tenant and balancing the space with several 3-4,000 square-foot spaces to accommodate the next smaller businesses.

The project for renovating Shed 4 will assist with long-term financial sustainability by creating a mixed-use space, as well as a model for others wanting to build a dedicated

market facility. Workforce housing is planned above the market hall space, which would allow for use of housing program financing; and, with a successful long-term housing project, incremental income could be created to support the market operations.

In the 1960's the highway administration constructed a six-lane freeway between the produce department north and the meat department across the street, which is Gratiot Central Market. Street scape work is underway to help reconnect the district through a promenade to make a more enjoyable journey through the market and to better blend the market between meat and fruits and vegetables.

Another important goal is to build a Sunday market consisting of non-food vendors, creating the same type of sale platform for those producers. This will help not only the sustainability of the Market, but that of households throughout Detroit.

Whatever is done at Eastern Market is not enough to solve food access issues, so they partner with numerous organizations to get food from their wholesale market into neighborhoods without grocery stores. Those include Fresh Food Share, which is a partnership with Gleaners Food Bank; an internal Eastern Market Pop-up Stand Program; Detroit Community Markets; encouraging demand for healthy, locally grown food; and providing for alternative payment programs such as Double Up Food Bucks, Fair Food Network, and Eastern Market's Bridge Card Headquarters.

The Market's work centers on collaboration with many different partners in the community to use an historic relic as a place for gathering, engaging, and addressing the long-term issue of diet changes. Detroit Eastern Market is proud to be a part of that team, where they actually lead the nation in taking food hub and regional food system development to the next level. Working on both narrative and legislation around the importance of what regional food systems can offer are areas where MDARD could help in the future. Those would include 1) continued help to rebuild some of the smaller scale infrastructure, such as the Value Added Grants; 2) between MDARD and MSU, help determine the best way to connect people in food systems and identify best practices; and 3) confronting the economic development challenge to elevate food in a rural/urban collaboration.

Commissioner Coe noted the loss of agriculture's voice in Congress, with less than six percent of members coming from rural areas, and keeping agriculture alive in urban areas will improve that voice. He added that what Detroit Eastern Market is accomplishing is important and truly inspiring.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked Mr. Carmody for his presentation and for the tour and networking opportunities over the last two days. It gave the Commission an opportunity to understand various aspects of the wonderful things happening today around food and agriculture in Detroit.

### **FORGOTTEN HARVEST UPDATE: Tom Cihonski, Chief Operating Officer, Forgotten Harvest**

Mr. Cihonski reported Forgotten Harvest was formed in 1990 to fight hunger and waste in the Detroit metropolitan community by rescuing surplus prepared and perishable food

and donating it to emergency food providers. Being one of the nation's largest food rescue operations, Forgotten Harvest delivered over 40 million pounds of food last year. There currently are over 260 recipient agencies in its network that consist of emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless and domestic shelters, children's homes, senior centers, and group homes.

A tremendous cultural indifference to food waste exists in our society today, which is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to be 96 billion pounds per year. Forgotten Harvest rescues food from a large variety of sources, including hotels, sports arenas, manufacturers, distributors, grocery stores, and community gardens.

Forgotten Harvest's service area includes Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties and covers over 2,000 square miles each day. It operates under the direction of a volunteer board of directors and a small, dedicated professional staff. The over 30 front-line drivers are supported by over 16,000 volunteers and over 30 donated refrigerated trucks. At over \$100,000 for a tractor and \$80,000 for a trailer, corporate partners who support the effort are certainly key to what the organization is able to do.

Critical to Forgotten Harvest's success is a collaboration of over 260 agency partners, which includes 60 mobile pantries. Last year, over nine million pounds of food was distributed through the Mobile Pantry Program. Putting that into perspective, a typical mobile pantry serves an average of 250 families.

The Forgotten Harvest Processing Center in Oak Park sorts, washes, chops, cools, and stores food using new and used equipment. A staff of 20-40 volunteers runs that facility six days a week. Electrical, plumbing, and facility upgrades to this location were made possible through a Value-Added Grant from MDARD.

A second Processing Center blanches, packs, labels, and chill-freezes food items. Garden Fresh loaned the physical space to Forgotten Harvest and provides onsite mentoring and expert guidance. New and used equipment was purchased with an MDARD Value-Added Grant.

In the spring of 2012, Forgotten Harvest was able to realize a long-held dream and establish Forgotten Harvest Farms. Approximately 37 acres of land, located in Macomb County and provided by the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department, were farmed and harvested. The farm is expected to yield nearly 2 million pounds of crops this year.

In response to questions from Commissioners Hanson and Coe, Mr. Cihonski advised food safety is their top priority and a system is in place to provide traceability. Accordingly to recent study, the food need for Metro Detroit will remain at 200-300 million pounds of food each year, and this represents the gap after all of the government assistance programs are considered.

Mr. Cihonski extended appreciation to MDARD and the Detroit Eastern Market for their valuable partnership – the scale of Forgotten Harvest's success would not have been

possible otherwise. Yet, they feel what is being accomplished currently is merely the initial stage and economics will clearly justify expansion in the future.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Derek Bajema, Legislative Liaison**

Mr. Bajema reported there are just four days left before the Legislature begins a two-month summer break. Because carpet is being replaced in the Legislature, there will be no tentative days scheduled during those two months.

The department is working on moving House Bill 4038, which, in conjunction with Senate Bill 26, would add Autumn Olive to the list on invasive species. MDARD is also working on House Bill 4126, dealing with equine liabilities, and a bill regarding liabilities on farm markets, on which the administration has some concerns because it appears to be somewhat overreaching.

It is hoped that House Bill 4132 will be complete next week. It addresses Conservation District processes, in particular the current situation in Midland County.

Under House Bill 4300, private ownership of monkeys would no longer be allowed. House Bill 4335 would allow dogs to be on patios of certain restaurants, and work is progressing to implement parameters to ensure food safety. An animal abuse registry would be instituted under House Bills 4534 and 4535, with an interest in MDARD being the lead agency in lieu of the State Police.

House Bill 4546 changes membership geography and assessment rates of the Michigan Potato Industry Commission. There also is a companion bill in the Senate. Drain Commission boundaries would have more flexibility under House Bill 4622 to ensure those benefiting from drain projects are properly assessed.

The water withdrawal dispute resolution legislation, House Bill 4678, was referred to Government Operations. The department is working on a resolution and he encouraged Commissioners to ask their legislators for expeditious passage of this important legislation.

Senate Bills 51 and 53-58, and House Bills 4069 and 4243-4244 are part of the nine-bill Private Forestry Package signed into law by the Governor last week. This demonstrates that rural development was more than just an addition to the department's name, it represents being integrally involved in policy.

A vote is expected tomorrow on the Wetland Bill (Senate Bill 163). Senate Bills 332 (fertilizer and biosolids) and 354 (euthanization techniques), along with 315 (mirror of House potato bill) and 351 (fertilizer) will be considered in the Senate Agriculture Committee tomorrow.

There are several pieces of legislation that the department will help to initiate in the fall, including the feed law and fertilizer and pesticide changes.

### **COMMISSIONER ISSUES**

The Commissioners had no additional issues to bring forward.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No additional public comment was requested.

**ADJOURN**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes April 10, 2013*
- C) *Director Jamie Clover Adams – Issues of Interest Report*
- D) *City of Detroit Urban Agriculture Ordinance Abridged April 2013*
- E) *Detroit Eastern Market Presentation*
- F) *Forgotten Harvest Presentation*
- G) *Legislative Status – June 2013*