



**Sustainability Committee**  
**Monday, January 13**  
**1:30 PM – 2:30 PM**  
**GVMC**

## **Minutes**

1. Welcome and Introductions

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Rachell Nagorsen       | g. Courtney Cromley |
| b. Rachel Frantz          | h. Kyle Hart        |
| c. Anne Power             | i. Dan Taber        |
| d. Carlos Calderon        | j. Jerry Miller     |
| e. Greg Madura            | k. Wendy Ogilvie    |
| f. Rev. Nurya Love Parish |                     |

2. RCPP Grant Updates

- a. Overall RCPP we are progressing well, getting closer on the river part and working hard on the agriculture part. Next EQIP sign up will be in the end of February. Working on three grants with Kent Conservation District.
- i. KCD EGLE 319
    - 1. Set to start tillage survey of Indian Mill Creek, Nash Creek, and Ball Creek. The QAPP has approved, waiting for comments on the maps.
  - ii. KCD EPA EE grant
    - 1. This is a two-year grant that will bring students from Sparta and Burton Elementary (GRPS) out to Plainsong Farm.
    - 2. One workshop is scheduled at Plainsong Farm in August in cooperation with West Michigan Growers Group and Kent Conservation District.
  - iii. KCD NACD grant
    - 1. This grant will fund Lance's time to conduct outreach and connect with farmers in the Rogue River and Indian Mill Creek watersheds.

### 3. Natural Connections

- a. Courtney and Rachel worked on this map and have it developed enough to begin sharing with other LGROW committees to use as a tool and making it available on the web. <https://www.lgrow.org/green-infrastructure>.
- b. With the work of this Committee being completed on this project, it will now go back to the GIS Users Group for further development and it will be presented to the LGROW Subwatershed Committee as a planning tool.

### 4. Grand River Expedition (GRE 2020) Update

- a. Two committees are meeting currently, the full GRE 2020 committee as well as a Lower Grand River planning meeting. If anyone is interested in participating with this group, please let Wendy know.
- b. Nurya will pass on dates and information to the Grand Valley faith group who is looking for an environmental project.
- c. A graduate student from GVSU will be taking continuous water quality data for the entire expedition as well as a journalism student who may go as well.
- d. A separate committee has been formed to plan the event in the Lower Grand River portion, so this topic is being moved out of this Committee's work.

### 5. Water Trail

- a. The Middle Grand has updated their water trail plan with a few additional templates for signs and mapping. The Upper Grand has a completed their plan. The Lower Grand is currently waiting on inventory from WMEAC to move ahead with its plan. Kyle will try to find this data to send to LGROW.
- b. The 360 map is finished, it is similar Google street view for the Grand River. It is a little choppy, but it is done for the entire Grand River. Wendy will present this map at the next sustainability meeting. Once we have the inventory information, we can update the interactive Lower Grand water trail map that currently exists on Google maps.

### 6. Farmland Preservation

- a. The LGR Watershed Management Plan includes plans for zoning and farmland preservation. Wendy, Nurya, and Jerry are on a committee for this effort. At the last meeting they discussed needing to get the word out. Can this committee do anything to help? The Farmland Preservation committee has been meeting for a few years and have had some events where they have brought in individuals who have existing farmland preservation programs. An informational session at Blandford Nature Center was held and a fundraiser was held in April 2019, which was successful. They have ongoing

communications with County Commissioners and staff and there is some support among commissioners and county administrator. At this point the committee needs more visibility and are planning next steps to get funding.

- b. Greg mentioned he has met with Wayman Britt, Kent County Administrator, who is on board with farmland preservation. There is a small group of county commissioners who are against it due to development pressures.
  - c. Nurya said there was a strong sense that it is not a coherent culture here in Michigan that understands the importance of farmland preservation. Ann Arbor has done significant work around farmland preservation.
  - d. Something we could focus on is “if we cut our agricultural production in Michigan in half, what will happen to our prices in stores” as well as the food service restaurants who promote local food.
  - e. There has been a problem with connecting to the agricultural community for things like sustainable practices, preserving farmland, etc.
  - f. There is a greater need for a focused effort to make change.
  - g. This committee would be interested in working or helping on this effort and trying to figure this out.
  - h. Kyle suggested showing what is at stake by explaining to people that furthering the development takes away from agriculture and that makes a loss of local food. Showing a balance would be good to make sure people understand.
  - i. The key in Kent County is that we have unique soils due to air drainage as opposed to water drainage. We also have soil specialty crops that allows us to grow specialty crops like asparagus and fruit, in addition to the prime farmland.
  - j. Each county is tracking farmland loss throughout the state. It would be helpful to have some sort of dashboard or display to show people what is happening to farmland.
7. Watershed Resiliency
- a. LGROW is developing a watershed resiliency report for the Lower Grand River watershed. The format will be similar to the Watershed Management Plan whereas each subwatershed will have specific recommendations. This will assist subwatershed groups in focusing on certain issues as well as having the data to back up funding requests. Wendy would like this group to help with feedback for this report.
  - b. Looking at impacts, land use, ecosystems, watershed values, and a SWOT analysis potentially. Wendy will send draft out to group before next meeting.

8. 2020 meeting schedule

- a. The second Monday of every other month works best for Wendy and Rachell, hoping to eliminate the conflict with the sustainable business forum.
- b. Next meeting March 9
- c. Kent Conservation District Annual Meeting March 18
- d. MWEA Watershed Summit March 25
- e. Save the date: May 8 for LGROW Spring Forum