

## MINUTES

### **HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON Agriculture and Rural Development**

**DATE: March 12, 2019**

Chairman VanWoerkom called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Representatives VanWoerkom, Bollin, Albert, Green, Kennedy, Sabo, and Brixie were present.

Representative Bollin moved that the minutes of the February 19, 2019 meeting be approved; the motion was approved by voice vote without objection.

The Subcommittee heard a presentation by the Gary McDowell, Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) describing the proposed FY 2019-20 MDARD budget. Director McDowell was joined by MDARD Deputy Director, Ken McFarlane, and MDARD budget officer, Maria Tyszkiewicz. Copies of the MDARD PowerPoint presentation are included in the official minutes in House Fiscal Agency files.

Director McDowell described the proposed appropriation for the Double-Up Food Bucks program, and as well as Agriculture Preservation easements. Deputy Director McFarlane described proposed upgrades to department IT programs. The IT upgrades had three elements: a licensing portal; inspection systems; and a data warehouse. FY 2018-19 supplemental appropriation bill, Senate Bill 601 of the 2017-2018 Session, had included \$5.0 million in the DTMB budget for this project; an additional \$5.0 million is included in the proposed FY 2019-20 DTMB budget.

In response to questions from members, Mr. McFarlane gave examples of how IT improvements would impact program efficiency. He also discussed the IT procurement process, how costs of system maintenance were considered in developing the programs, and consideration of system connectivity in areas without broadband access. He indicated that most of project cost was for software development and implementation.

In response to questions from members, Director McDowell discussed proposed reductions funding for the food and agriculture grant program, and for the county fair grant program.

The subcommittee then heard testimony from Todd Regis, representing the United Food and Commercial Workers. Mr. Regis testified in support of the Double-Up Food Bucks Program. Copies of the MDARD written testimony are included in the official minutes in House Fiscal Agency files.

Chair VanWoerkom adjourned the meeting at 10:00 AM without objection.