

Healthy Pine River
Membership Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2025
7:00pm @ Alma Public Library

Call to Order: Dr. Ben Peterson

Approval of Minutes: Mikie/Brittany

Financial Report:

Beginning Balance as of 10/1/25	\$47,854.01
deposits & credits	\$ 592.67
withdrawals & debits	\$ 3,492.90
Ending Balance as of 10/31/25	\$44,953.78

Meeting Adjourned: Brittany/Doug

Quick Updates: HPR now has an office space inside the Wilcox center. We have created an Instagram @mihealthypineriver. The Dam Risk Reduction grant is in progress, with engineers from GEI Consultants coming for meetings with the city later this month. HPR's director Brittany has started a new full-time position in accounting and will be stepping down into the Treasurer role. We will be hiring a new director. The secretary position will be temporarily filled by Alma College ACE Scholarship student Allisaundra. Allisaundra is also making plans to create a gallery installment of our water testing data turned into artistic visuals to promote water quality education in new and fun ways.

Engaging our Farming Community: We hosted a panel of 5 individuals who work in the agricultural sector. This is a highly condensed and summarized edit of the responses. The full livestream of this meeting is available on <https://www.healthypineriver.org/meetings/> under the 'November 2025' header.

Question: What do people not understand about the farming community regarding their care for the environment?

Panel: Farming has greatly improved its sustainability practices. In the past, farmers were expected to wash manure directly into rivers, and practice other environmentally harmful practices. Modern farming practices are more environmentally friendly. Research is ongoing to improve sustainability in a practical, effective, and cost effective way.

Question: Are farmers generally aware of the level of contamination in the river and watershed?

Panel: Not to the extent that it is in our area. Many would be alarmed at how much soil enters the river through erosion of gravel roads into ditches, farming practices, and wind erosion.

Question: What support and recommendations do the farming community have in practicing environmentally sound farming practices?

Panel: Federal government's incentive programs to make it financially possible to implement sustainability programs. The future of the Farm Bill, which funds programs to support agriculture, is uncertain. It will be funded until Nov 2026. What is the best way to share testing data/methods, research, and new technologies to assist the farm community?

Panel: Farmers want to know the most efficient sustainability practices, and don't want to waste time and money in a process that will do little improvement. They will not do any practices that will be financially harmful to their businesses, but many would consider implementing these processes for fair compensation.

Question: How can the farming community assist in improving the Pine River?

Panel: Conservation District's MEAP program looks at environmental risks from farming and takes steps to reduce these risks. Throughout Michigan, there are 7000 verifications for the MEAP program (1.25 million acres). Participants in the program are offered an insurance discount from Farm Bureau. A partnership with MSU teaches manure handlers about safety and maximizing environmental performance, and those who participate in that program also receive insurance discounts.

On the increase in CAFOs in Gratiot County: Panel: CAFOs are required to demonstrate there is enough land to apply the manure or that they can transport the manure to a different area. Modern CAFOs are much improved and have more regulations than non-CAFOs.

On digestors: Current regulations make it impossible to have multi-farm digesters, which would make it impossible for small and medium sized farms to utilize them. They do have a desire to utilize digesters if the centralization model was allowed and available.

Next Meeting
January 8, 2026, 7PM
Alma Public Library