

Minutes of the State Agricultural and Bioeconomy Committee

Wednesday, August 19th, 2009

9:00 a.m.

Room 110 Farnum Building

- Chairman Van Woerkom called the Committee to order at 9:08 a.m.
- Members Present: Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz, Gleason and Whitmer.
- Senator Gilbert moved to approve the minutes from February, 12th, 2009. His motion was supported by Senator Whitmer and approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom invited Rep. Mayes to testify on House Bill 4887. He testified in support of House Bill 4887 and explained that it protects farm land and also encourages alternative energy.
- Rich Harlow and Nancy Nyquist from the Department of Agriculture testified in support of House Bill 4887 with out the Substitute. They explained that they do not support the permanent conservation easements in the Substitute.
- Nicole Campbell from Michigan Farm Bureau supported House Bill 4887 but did not wish to speak.
- Gary Melow from Michigan Biomass was neutral on House Bill 4887 and did not wish to speak.
- Chairman Van Woerkom explained House Bill 5086 regarding the growth of Agriculture in Michigan.
- Jim McBryde from The Michigan Economic Development Corporation testified in support of the House Bill 5086 and explained the need for more Agricultural Renaissance Zones.
- Tom Hickson from Michigan Association of Counties testified in opposition of House Bill 5086 as drafted. He mentioned that he supported the concept but can not support House bill 5086 as drafted because the counties have no say in the awarding of the Agricultural Renaissance Zones.
- Nancy Nyquist from the Department of Agriculture supported House Bill 5086 but did not wish to speak.
- Nicole Campbell from Michigan Farm Bureau supported House Bill 5086 but did not wish to speak.
- Senator Gleason moved to report House Bill 5086 with recommendation. His motion was supported by Senator Birkholz and was approved by the following vote:
Yeas: Van Woerkom, Birkholz, Gleason and Whitmer
Neas: none
Pass: Gilbert
- Senator Gleason moved to give House Bill 5086 immediate effect. His motion was supported by Senator Birkhols and approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom explained his bill, Senate Bill 607 that would amend the General Property Tax Act to include maple syrup in the definition of “agricultural real property”.
- Larry Haigh from the Michigan Maple Syrup Association testified in support of Senate Bill 607 and said that this would clear up disagreements between maple syrup producers and local assessors.

- Chairman Van Woerkom mentioned that he was considering an amendment to consider land used for maple syrup production would have to tap at least 100 trees. Chairman Van Woerkom Proceeded to ask Larry Haigh if this would complicate matters.
- Larry Haige said that is may, but it is hard to tell.
- Larry Steckelberg from the Michigan Department of Treasury testified in opposition of Senate Bill 607 and provided an explanation that the land could only be classified as agricultural if that is the lands highest and best use. He continued to explain the best way to deal with this is to let the current law work.
- Chairman Van Woerkom explained that the Committee would hold off on voting on this bill.
- With no more business before the committee Senator Gilbert motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 a.m.