



## 2025 MWC Annual Meeting Packet

*MWC Election to be conducted via Wild Apricot.  
Candidate information and Ballot located in this packet.*

## **Table of Contents**

Agenda.....	1
MWC Board Positions.....	2
Election Seats.....	3
Candidates.....	4-5

## Agenda

1. Meeting called to order [Brian Lillie, President]
2. Establishment of a quorum [Brian Lesperance, Secretary]

*The members present at any properly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum (MWC Bylaws, Section 4)*

3. Reading of Notice of Meeting:

**Notice of Annual Meeting (Sent out 12/9/2024):** Michigan Wine Collaborative will be holding our Annual Meeting & Election on January 14th at the 2025 Northwest Orchard & Vineyard Show at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City. The meeting will begin at 4:05 pm and will last about an hour. At this meeting we will be briefing our membership and the public on our achievements and projects from 2024, presenting our goals for 2025, getting update from our committees, and holding our Board of Directors Election.

**The following positions will be included on the ballot:**

**Winery Seat (SE Region)-** Currently held by Bob Utter (Flying Otter Winery)

**Winery Seat (Other Region)-** Currently held by Peter King (Drew Ryan Wines)

**Grower Seat (SW Region):** OPEN SEAT

**Grower Seat (Other Region)-** OPEN SEAT

**Tourism-** Ed Peabody (HOUR Media/Michigan Wine Country Magazine)

**Grower Seat (NW Region)-** OPEN SEAT

**Treasurer-** Currently held by Peter King (Drew Ryan Wines)

**Honorary IT Specialist:** OPEN SEAT

**Honorary Financial Specialist:** OPEN SEAT

We are encouraging all of our members to attend the 2025 NW Orchard & Vineyard Show and our Annual Meeting & Election in person. However, we are also offering remote participation. Instructions to participate via Zoom will be provided via email, provided on the MWC website, within the MWC newsletter, and by request. Contact us as [info@michiganwinecollaborative.com](mailto:info@michiganwinecollaborative.com) for that information or with any questions.

4. Approval of December's Meeting Minutes
5. Report of Officers
6. Report of Committees
7. Presentation of 2025 MWC Election Ballot- Board of Directors and membership/bylaws change proposals (E-vote following the meeting\*)
8. Unfinished business
9. Adjourn

## MWC Board Positions 2025

Below is the current Michigan Wine Collaborative Board of Directors.

*Positions up for re-election are highlighted in yellow*

*Open positions highlighted in green with candidates running in 2025.*

Board #	Elected	Term Expires	Board member	Representing	Executive Board Position (If Applicable)
1	2023	2026	Matt Moersch	SW Winery	
2	2023	2026	Brian Lesperance	SW Winery	Secretary
3	2023	2026	Brian Lillie	NW Winery	Vice President
4	2024	2027	Mike Laing	NW Winery	
5	2022	2025	Bob Utter	SE Winery	
6	2024	2027	Iza Babinska	Other Region Winery	
7	2025	2028	OPEN SEAT	NW Grape Grower	
8	2022	2025	Ed Peabody	Tourism	
9	2024	2027	Dennis Devitt	Supplier/Vendor	
10	2025	2028	OPEN SEAT	Other Region Grape Grower	
11	2022	2025	Peter King	Other Region Winery	Treasurer
12	2025	2028	OPEN SEAT	SW Grower	
13	2023	2026	Tamela Todd	Retail/Restaurant	
14	2023	2026	Andrew Backlin	SW Winery	
15	2023	2026	Bonnie Hardin	NW Winery	

\*E-Voting for the 2025 MWC Election will occur via Wild Apricot. Voting members of MWC should have received the ballot in their inboxes this morning (January 14<sup>th</sup>). Voting will remain open until Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> to provide enough time to review candidates and proposals. Contact us if you did not receive your ballot.

## Open Board Seats

Position	Candidate(s)	Representing
NW Grower	Barry O'Brien Robert Schutzki	O'Brien Vineyards Daddy Long Legs Vineyard
SW Grower	<b>OPEN</b>	-
Grower (OTHER REGION)	Bob Sorenson	Pleasant Valley Farm & Vineyards

## Executive Board

Position	Board member	Representing	
Treasurer	Peter King	Drew Ryan Wines	

## Open Honorary Seats

Position	Candidate	Representing	Opposition
IT Specialist	Jeff Wheeler	Thistlevale Vineyards	NONE
Financial Strategist	Ed Bueche	Peak Financial Services, LLC	NONE

## Candidates-

### *Bob Utter- Flying Otter Winery*

## Wineries- SE Winery



For over 10 years Bob has been owner, winemaker, and vineyard manager at Flying Otter Winery in SE MI. Since the sale of Flying Otter Bob has stayed on to steward the vineyard and winery into a new era. Formerly active in VESTA including curriculum development, Bob has displayed a significant passion for viticulture and enology as well as enhancing the Michigan wine industry.

### **Current Term Achievements:**

- Founding member of previous Cold Climate Committee

### **Priorities/Initiatives:**

- Actively participate in PA232 initiative.
- Continue to remind everyone that vineyards and wineries are thriving in all of Michigan, not just west and northwest Michigan.

## Winery- Other Region

### Executive Board- Treasurer



#### *Peter King- Drew Ryan Wines*

My name is Peter King III and I am in my second year a treasurer for the Michigan Wine Collaborative. I am the co-founder of Drew Ryan Wines located in Detroit Michigan. In addition, I have more than a decade of accounting experience. I hold a BBA in Accounting from Tennessee State University. Some of my career achievements that would directly benefit the collaborative would be my experience with GAAP accounting, financial data analysis as well as process automation. In addition, I have over a decade of experience using QuickBooks online. Over the past two years as the treasurer for the Collaborative I have automated the check distribution/payroll process for our executive director and for some of our routine vendors. Each month for our monthly zoom calls I have presented a monthly expense report to the board. I filed our 2022 tax returns, and I also reconciled our QuickBooks account to match our general checking account when I first started as the treasurer for the Michigan Wine Collaborative.

#### **Priorities/Initiatives:**

1. Ensure quality financial reporting and budgeting
2. File tax returns
3. Provide insight on financial strategies or financial goals of the collaborative

## Grower (Other Region)



#### *Bob Sorenson- Pleasant Valley*

Bob's passion for wines began like many others – a love for the diverse choices, flavors, and pairings that they offer. What started as a challenge from a relative has evolved into a family venture that includes owning a vineyard, processing various wines, and establishing a tasting room. This journey has been both rewarding and challenging, with the Sorensen family embracing the yearly hurdles posed by Mother Nature, along with the ongoing learning and hard work that accompany this endeavor. Bob found great joy in the supportive and collaborative community of grape growers and winemakers, which has enriched his experience.

Until recently, Bob was a partner at Eastbrook Homes, a residential development and building company serving the West and Central Michigan regions, from Lansing to Holland and Grand Rapids to Muskegon and Whitehall. They focused on both suburban and urban projects, contributing to the growth of our cities.

Dedicated to education, Bob has been an advocate of the charter school movement in Michigan, serving as President of the Board at Eagle Crest Charter School for several years. Currently, Bob is a proud member of the Board and Executive Committee for Grace Adventures, a nonprofit family Christian organization based in Mears, Michigan.

## **NW Grower**



### ***Barry O'Brien- O'Brien Vineyards***

After graduating from Michigan State University, Barry O'Brien began his career in the wine trade as a Wine Waiter and Sommelier in Boulder Colorado at The Flagstaff House, a Four Star restaurant and one of the first Grand Award winning wine lists. He then toured many European wine growing regions from a base in Barcelona, before moving to New York City to work for the Mœt-Hennessy group in Sales and Marketing. While in NYC, Barry researched and completed his dissertation on Cool Climate Viticulture for The Institute of Masters of Wine based in London.

In 1997, Barry founded Select Fine Wine Imports to begin importing and distributing wines from New Zealand, Argentina, Chile and Spain. Following his marriage to Laura Minervini, the company was moved to Traverse City where they bought property and planted a vineyard on the Old Mission Peninsula. Barry's interest in Cool Climate Viticulture resulted in planting Pinot noir, Riesling and Gewürztraminer with a focus on Sparkling wines and dry farmed dry table wines. Following a return to MSU for a degree in Viticulture, Barry has recently launched O'Brien Vineyards and has opened a tasting room at The Village at Grand Traverse Commons in Traverse City.

#### **Priorities/Initiatives:**

- A strong focus on creating more traction and placements for "Local" wine distribution in Restaurants and retailers throughout the state.
- Stimulate more exposure in the national wine press for Michigan wines
- Generate enthusiasm for "Climate Appropriate" and sustainable wine styles from Michigan regions.

### ***Robert Schutzki, PhD- Daddy Long Legs Vineyard***



Retired faculty member from Michigan State University Department of Horticulture after 38 years with responsibilities in teaching and extension. Teaching and extension responsibilities focused on the landscape and nursery industry. He has served on national, regional, and state committees related to the green industry and our outdoor environment. Started Daddy Long Legs Vineyards with Scott Schutzki in 2011. It is a 7-acre vineyard growing 7 varieties (3 hybrids, 4 vinifera) composed of 3 reds and 4 whites. Annual Harvests (plus/minus 20 tons) are sold to Michigan wineries. Member of the Michigan Wine Collaborative and P45.

#### **Priorities/Initiatives-**

- Promoting research and education for the grape and wine industry. More specifically, working on the Wine Grape Growers PA 232 program.
- Developing research priorities for vineyards and wineries and evaluating educational needs (both in the field and in the winery) for the industry.
- Promoting Michigan wines to the consumer focusing on award winners, unique varieties, and characteristic blends.

## Tourism



### *Ed Peabody- HOUR Media/Michigan Wine Country Magazine*

Ed Peabody is publishing director at Hour Media, headquartered in Troy, Michigan, and has been part of the Michigan wine industry for 20 years. For many years, Ed worked with the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council (MGWIC) to publish Michigan Wine Country magazine. When it became apparent that the MGWIC was facing dissolution, Ed convinced the ownership of Hour Media and lobbied MDARD to transfer full responsibility for the magazine to Hour Media. Thanks to advertising support from Michigan wineries and other industry stakeholders, he will continue to publish this vital promotional tool, whose mission is to stimulate Michigan wine tourism.

Ed has been the Tourism board member of the Michigan Wine Collaborative since 2019 and serves on the marketing committee, where he played a key role in the development of the Taste Michigan brand by bringing Mark Lantz, author of the iconic Pure Michigan campaign and owner of Factory Detroit, to the table.

## IT Specialist



### *Jeff Wheeler- Thistlevale Vineyard*

Jeff Wheeler leads a global technology organization responsible for a platform supporting over \$1 billion in annual revenue. With a passion for people, community, and the transformative power of AI, he is dedicated to fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth across industries.

Outside of his corporate leadership, Jeff and his wife are pioneering the first vineyard and winery in the Caledonia, Michigan area. Committed to organic and regenerative farming practices, he aims to be a responsible steward of the land while building a community-centered agricultural business.

A devoted husband, father of two, and the proud wrangler of a golden retriever, Jeff brings a holistic perspective to leadership, balancing professional excellence with personal values of sustainability, family, and community impact

#### **Priorities/Initiatives:**

- **Provide a Secure and Reliable Technology Platform**  
Establish a stable, secure, and user-friendly digital platform where members can easily access resources and collaborate. Regularly update and maintain the platform to meet evolving member needs.
- **Build Strategic Technology Partnerships**  
Develop relationships with technology providers who offer tools and services that support both wineries and vineyards. Create opportunities for member-exclusive discounts, education, and collaboration with these partners.
- **Understand and Align with Member Technology Needs**  
Engage with members through surveys, meetings, and feedback sessions to better understand their technology challenges. Use this input to create a unified strategy that delivers practical solutions for all members.



## **Financial Strategist**



### ***Ed Bueche- Peak Financial Services***

Ed is a West Michigan native who enjoys traveling around Michigan. A graduate from Aquinas College with both a BS in Accounting and MM; also earned the CMA designation.

He has a wide variety of experiences as CFO in non-profits (domestic and international), manufacturing, services and healthcare. Spent several years as the general manager for a small private equity fund that made 90+% of their investments internationally; primarily in Africa, Central America and the Philippines. He shares his passion for “all things business” as an adjunct professor at several local colleges and universities.

In addition to his current role as a CFO, his side gig is an accounting / tax / business consulting practice assisting individuals and businesses grow and develop. Also, as an amateur winemaker, he keeps trying to get better.

Ed brings his financial background to the Michigan Wine Collaborative by serving as the Honorary Financial Strategist Board Member.

#### **Priorities/Initiatives-**

- Review and assist with budgeting & cash forecasts
- Review and assist with meaningful financial reporting
- Utilize good financial management to assist in goal achievement
- Assist the Board with overall financial strategy to avoid mission drift