



**TITLE:** SAND HILL RIVER  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 25, 2019

**Attendance:** Chairman Scott Tollefson called the November 25, 2019 meeting of the Sand Hill Advisory Committee (SHAC) to order at the Erickson's Smokehouse in Fertile, MN. Other advisory members present were Phillip Swenson, Allen Stromstad, Scott Balstad, Gerald Paulson, Kenny Pederson, Aaron Iverson, Joan Lee, Mark Christianson, Roger Black, Aaron Habermehl, Rory Hamre, Jim Todahl, Lori Thronson, Jerry Jacobson, and Wayne Goeken. Others in attendance included April Swenby – Administrator.

**Annual Reorganization of the Committee:** Chairman Tollefson turned the meeting over to Joan Lee. Lee asked for nominations for Committee Chair. Committee Member Balstad nominated Committee Member Scott Tollefson as chair. Committee Member Todahl made a **Motion** to cease nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Scott Tollefson, **Seconded** by Committee Member Pederson, **Carried**.

The meeting was then turned over to Chairman Tollefson who presented the agenda.

**Minutes:** A **Motion** was made to dispense the reading of the minutes by Committee Member Black, **Seconded** by Manager Paulson, **Carried**. A **Motion** to approve the minutes from November 19, 2018 was made by Committee Member Pederson, **Seconded** by Committee Member Allan Stromstad, **Carried**.

**District Financials:** The Committee was given the November 2019 Treasurer's Report of the Sand Hill River Watershed. Chairman Tollefson asked how the district handled ditches that have a negative balance. Swenby explained that ditches that retain a positive balance are paid the average interest rate towards their balance and ditches that retain a negative balance are charged the average interest rate towards their balance. The levies are submitted as a board decision annually is based on the balance of each ditch and the prospection maintenance or repairs needed in the future and levied appropriately. Each ditch is unique according to their needs.

Last year the committee asked for district YTD balances. Swenby explained that that the board asked Swenby to disperse the audit report which includes YTD balances. Chairman Tollefson asked that Swenby ask the board to consider placing the audit report on the district web-site so that the committee can access the information ahead of their meetings.

Committee Member Balstad asked Swenby to mail him a copy of the report when it becomes available as he prefers a printed copy in lieu of a digital copy. Swenby asked Committee Member Balstad to call and request it next year, usually, around August as a reminder. There are many things to take care of as Administrator and she admitted that she might forget to mail him a copy when it becomes available, but if she does not remember she encouraged him to call.

**Manager Appointment:** The terms of JJ Hamre and Roger Hanson are up for reappointment beginning January 1, 2020. Manager Hamre is willing to serve another term. Manager Hanson has suffered some health issues and is unable to server another term.

Committee Member Paulson suggested aligning the committee's recommendations with the county's applicants and ask the county to submit the names of the applicants they receive to the Sand Hill Advisory Committee for review. He feels that the committee should review a list of all the interested parties, not just the ones that the committee suggests or recruits. Committee Member Paulson shared with the committee that a couple of years ago, Phillip Swenson was not recommended as a manager, and a recruited name was, stating that there was no recorded reason for not recommending Swenson. At that time, Committee Member Paulson had also contacted the county as an interested party, but his name was never given to the committee. He suggested it would be good practice to avoid that in the future. Committee Member Swenson confirmed that he is over and done with that but did indicate that there were comments made at the time that made it seem like the decision to not reappoint him was a "railroad job". Committee Member Swenson added as a side note that there are many things he reads in the minutes that he feels the district is "not getting done" and hasn't gotten done for years.

Many committee members agreed that Committee Member Paulson's suggestion would be a good practice to incorporate for the future recommendations to the Sand Hill River Watershed District board of managers. It was suggested the Swenby contact the county to coordinate a system for upcoming years that allows for the Advisory

Committee to review all interested party names before they make a recommendation. Some committee members thought it might as simple as asking the county to adjust the deadline for application and set it before the advisory committee meeting each year.

A **Motion** was made by Committee Member Todahl to recommend JJ Hamre to the Polk County Commissioners, **Seconded** by Committee Member Balstad, **Carried**.

Two names were presented to the committee as possible interested managers. Troy Olson and Craig Engelstad. It was agreed that both candidates would represent well. Committee Member Balstad noted that Engelstad may have more experience with agency and watershed procedures. Committee Member Todahl added that Engelstad would represent well and help keep the watershed managed. Many committee members did not know either candidate.

A **Motion** was made by Committee Member Balstad to recommend Craig Engelstad to the Polk County Commissioners, **Seconded** by Committee Member Swenson, **Carried**.

Committee Member Swenson asked if managers attend other items other than regular meetings. Swenby did not have an attendance list for items outside of the regular board meetings but noted that the MAWD Legislative Breakfast has been attended by Manager Vesledahl and Manager Hanson has displayed regular attendance at the MAWD annual meeting, RRBC conferences and drainage conferences. Committee Member Swenson asked if Manager Hamre attends and Swenby could not recall specifics but did not that Hamre did attend a Red River Basin Commission conference this past January. Swenby stated that all that is typically required is regular meetings or other meetings required to perform watershed business. The conferences are optional, noting that it is a “catch 22” with younger managers as they are not yet retired and additional conferences may be an additional burden for work schedules, however younger managers provide longevity and continuity to a board for many years to come. Committee Member Swenson added that the board managers should be attending outside conferences and shouldn’t just come to meetings just to collect per diems. Committee Member Balstad suggested that the managers be asked to attend the MAWD trainings at a minimum.

**Administrator Report:** Swenby presented a written report to the Advisory Committee that provided a summary of 2019 activities including 2019 construction project reports, ongoing district tasks, district building and handicapped accessibility progress, administrative changes such as insurance, bylaws, staffing, income and internal controls, technology updates, and upcoming projects and tasks for the future.

Much discussion was held regarding the Sand Hill River Watershed District’s Project # 1 at the direction of Committee Member Paulson. Committee Member Paulson gave a history of the project, complications with the project and the water flows in the area based on actions taken by the board. He also stated that the structure itself is experiencing some scouring/erosion. Swenby confirmed that this has been inspected and the engineer has been asked to draft up a solution.

Committee Member Paulson stated that there is not an assessed area for the project for maintenance and an ad valorem tax is used (which assesses the whole district) for maintenance, contradictory to the Preliminary Engineer’s report and engineer’s suggestion. Chairman Tollefson asked if there has ever been a discussion to include an assessed area for this project. Swenby stated that this project was the first project of the district back in the late 70’s. Much has been learned since then. There isn’t a question of “enough” money for maintenance. The question that faces the board is where the dollars spent for maintenance is justified in accordance with the project operations and what is the most steward action for tax payer dollars. The board can levy using the “petitions process through the county”, which is what they currently use to fund the maintenance for the project. The board evaluated this project a couple of years ago to address these questions. The board has opted to review any area outside of the Mahnomen/Polk line to the Krogstad bridge on a case by case basis, noting that the township helps with beaver removal and obstructions. Anything within those boundaries, staff has been instructed to take care of without board action. She stated that at the time of this decision, the engineer was asked to evaluate the area and the project and has stated that there is enough fall after the Krogstad bridge to not have impact on the project. She encouraged any concerned landowner to present their case or bring new information to the board of managers.

Committee Member Roger Black would like to see the board revisit the noted jurisdiction of the project area to include downstream of the Krogstad Bridge.

**Committee Member Comments:** Referring to Committee Member Swenson’s comment earlier noting that many things don’t get done that are noted in the district minutes, Swenby asked Committee Member Swenson for

specifics regarding the areas he feels the district or staff is not getting done so that she can address them. He stated that there were areas of sluffing on project # 17. Swenby stated that the board has taken action and is considering hiring an outside firm to complete soil testing to help better develop a permanent solution for the bank sluffing. He also stated that a landowner has called him to see if he was on the board still and he asked the landowner to call the district office. He was unsure what the call was regarding, but in the past, it was about sluffing on Project #17. Swenby had not received a phone call from the named landowner and could not attest if the landowner had ever reached out to Wilkens while he was Administrator.

Committee Member Balstad asked if the easements were secured for the Union Lake Pumping Project. Swenby confirmed that three of the four required easements were secured with temporary easements. The fourth one has been postponed due to health issues of the current owner. The district has recently been informed that the pump site does not have a watershed easement. Before it became a watershed project the county had jurisdiction and did not need an easement for a site located within their ROW. Now that the watershed is the project facilitator, the district attorney feels that proper paperwork would be beneficial. Those documents are being drafted.

Committee Member Paulson told Swenby that she was doing a good job managing the district. Chairman Tollefson thanked Swenby for her work. Committee Member Allan Stromstad commented that he appreciated the written summary of the district activities. There were no further comments from committee members.

**Adjournment:** The next meeting of the SHAC will be at the call of the chair as needed. As there was no further business, a **Motion** was made by Committee Member Stromstad to adjourn, **Seconded** by Committee Member Pederson, **Carried.**

---

April Swenby, Administrator