



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: MARCH 2, 2021

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the March 2, 2021 meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Don Andringa, Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad, and JJ Hamre. One staff member was present April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Office Assistant. Others in attendance were Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

The February minutes did not indicate that Manager Hamre made a Motion to approve the agenda. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2021, adjusting the text indicating that Manager Hamre approved the agenda for the February 2, 2021 meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Swenby read the Treasurer’s Report. Swenby noted that a new CD was purchased with First National Bank of Bemidji. The CDARS investment was up for renewal, and FNB offered a .95% APY. Because of the low interest rate in the Money Market account, Swenby withdrew an additional \$200,000 from the money market and added it to the new CD purchase. It was noticed that the Sand Hill checking account accrued more interest than the money market account, even though the checking account has a substantially lower balance. Swenby stated that she plans on making some calls to follow up on this discussion. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the Treasurer’s Report for February, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

The managers reviewed their expense reports and reported on activities for the month. The following bills were reviewed:

Anders Valley Publishing	220.80
April J. Swenby	266.78
Bejou Township	260.00
City of Fertile	51.68
EcoLab	53.57
Fertile Hardware Hank	19.26
First Community Credit Union	67.22
Garden Valley Telephone Company	324.53
Houston Engineering	29,764.75
Marco	549.36

Office Supplies Plus	67.93
Otter Tail Power Company	434.50
Sarah Wise	48.00
Stuhaug Sanitation	46.80
Todd's Landscaping	105.00
	<u>32,280.18</u>

A **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$32,280.18 **Seconded** by Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

5. RCPP PLANNING EFFORT

Keith Weston and Deb Walchuck joined the meeting via conference calling. The discussion was surrounded the RCPP planning efforts, as the grant is nearing close out. Herrmann explained how the process unfolded from start to finish. Herrmann informed them that a complete NRCS plan will not be obtained by the time the grant expires. Walchuck confirmed that she did inquire about an extension but has not heard.

The board asked about new agreements with NRCS for smaller sub watershed areas of holding water. Walchuck and Weston will investigate the programs available to assist with additional areas for holding water.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT:

Union Lake Sarah Interconnect: Swenby and Herrmann met with Dave Hauff regarding the process for replacing the open channel with pipe. The attorney is reviewing the options.

Sand Hill Ditch: Herrmann provided an estimate for required R/W acreage and estimates about \$1,000,000. Manager Engelstad asked if the estimate provided accommodations for those areas where the channel has changed or widened in reference to the original plans. Herrmann will investigate Manager Engelstad's question and take that into account, verifying what the district's obligation is with our legal partners.

Houston Engineering has developed a benefit area based on data provided by Polk County. Currently there are 62,000 acres in the current benefit area. The actual estimated drainage area is 222,000 acres.

Herrmann suggests for discussion, because of the magnitude of the project, a viewing company be hired, should the managers proceed forward. Herrmann will reach out to a couple of companies to get a cost estimate.

Poissant Bridge Removal: Herrmann provided photos of the bridge that was relocated on February 24, 2021. The contractor plans to complete the remaining work prior to March 15, 2021 (if conditions allow).

Project # 17: Herrmann has been working on the flow study, and plans on a presentation next month.

MN Highway 102 Area Boundary Revisions: Herrmann plans on a presentation next month.

7. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Building Project: This past month's cold weather reminded Swenby how cold the district building actually gets when rippled. That in addition to the sewer gas smell has prompted her to bring up for discussion our building project. The district has placed on hold a second source of heat, hoping to incorporate that into the new building addition. Since the new roof was put on, the furnace pipe/chimney has been vacated, leaving the district with only electric off peak heat. Swenby presented a new idea relating to asking the Historical Society of MN for funding aid for the proposed renovations. She spoke with a Norman County Commissioner who used this grant to help the county revise the County Courthouse. She stated that preservation remodeling does cost more, which is why they have these grants. There are restrictions, such as the building must be committed to being open to the public for 30 years and grant projects must be ready to begin once the grant is awarded. Swenby reported that she looked on the web-site and the district is not currently listed as a historical building. Also, according to the information she has found the district could be eligible based on this criteria: Restoration/Preservation/Rehabilitation and Building Systems and Accessibility. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to direct Swenby to obtain more information from the Historical Society and find out what the district options are, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

BWSR Representative seat available: MAWD is accepting applications for candidates interested in filling the watershed representative seat on the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The deadline for this application is March 24, 2021. Swenby reiterated that this would be a huge benefit to our district and our region. Swenby provided information and the application. Swenby offered to help any manager complete the application if they are willing to serve and seek MAWD's recommendation for approval. Manager Engelstad asked if a manager was required or if that an appointed official represent. Swenby was unsure but would follow up with Engelstad when she receives confirmation of this question.

International Water Institute: Swenby attended the February IWI meeting. A new board manager was appointed.

Legislative meetings: Swenby met with Mark Johnson and Deb Kiel this month and discussed various issues, namely the request for legislative assistance for flowage easements through the Vesledahl Wetland Mitigation Site. A packet was included for manager review showing all the landowners who signed the request for legislative assistance.

Poissant Bridge: Work on the Poissant Bridge began the week of February 22. The bridge was moved with the crane on February 24. Spruce Valley removed bridge abutment and excavation materials on February 25 and began placing some of the channel rip rap material February 25-26. Spruce Valley said they are hoping to finish the rip rap placement and Rock Arch Weirs by March 5. The contractor is working with the landowner directly and currently stockpiling excavation materials and they are planning to truck the excess materials off site later. The final bridge relocation is going to be done when Spruce Valley has a level pad to set it on. Spruce Valley has been working directly with the landowner on the bridge placement.

Partnering Agencies: Packets from the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, International Water Institute and the Red River Watershed Management Board were provided to the managers.

Union Lake Pumping Project: HEI is working on providing a plan to present to USFWS for a permanent structure.

FDRWG: Due to other commitments, Swenby was unable to attend the FDRWG meeting in February. The managers were provided documents pertaining to the meeting. She met with the Chair and the Co-Chair of the FDRWG on February 25, regarding legislative support for funding, and Swenby confirmed that the legislation was supported by the district. She was told she was approved for the Communication Committee.

Buffalo Red Watershed District meeting: Swenby met with the new Administrator, Kristine Alrichter, from the Buffalo Red River Watershed District. Swenby reported that they discussed items such as the RRWMB, the FDRWG, and joining lobbying efforts in the future.

One Watershed One Plan: Swenby met with the Polk County Commissioners who passed a resolution to support the districts 1W1P application. She has formed a steering committee comprised of representatives from the three counties and three SWCD's. All have agreed to participate. A draft MOA has been written and was provided to the managers. This is subject to change but was introduced to the partners in an effort to complement the grant application. The Sand Hill Board of managers approved by consensus the language on the MOA.

Rock Riffles Signage: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council has recommended that the district implement signs for the riffles. Swenby has the signs ready to go, through Premier Signs and the Council representative has approved the language. She spoke Herrmann regarding his opinion for sign locations and he suggested one near the fourth drop structure someplace southwest of the intersection, and/or one a mile to the west at the next township road crossing. A third could be placed at the third crossing near the bridge on the township road about 1.5 miles east of Beltrami, MN, or one off of Highway 9 south of Beltrami so more people see it. Manager Engelstad suggested that the district place them far enough off the road where they will not be an obstacle for farm equipment.

Redistribution of Managers: The Mahnomon Co. Board of Commissioners has expressed interest in having an appointed manager position on the SHWD Board. They have inquired about the next 10-year interval to petition for the redistribution of managers. Since Mahnomon only represents 7% of the SHWD, they have expressed interest in sharing a manager position with Norman County. Swenby is working with BWSR to work out the process for this, and what the watershed needs to do to accommodate, should they like to proceed. She has asked to be placed on the county agenda in the upcoming months to get a better feel for what they would like to accomplish and why they feel this may be necessary.

Permit Application/Rules and Regulations: In the past the district has always had a "one page" permit. Because of our new permitting approval process, which involves HEI's review, there has been discussion of revising the permit, to ask for more information to save Engineer/Staff going back and forth with landowners Swenby provided the managers a copy of the Wild Rice Watershed District permit and a copy of the Sand Hill's existing, for comparison. Swenby commented that a positive side to the Wild Rice's, is that their permit was derived from the original permit database that was modified for the current district online application indicating that there would need to be minimal revisions to the district's online system. If the managers choose to switch, the district's paper copy and the district's online application would be identical.

If the district tries to meet in the middle and ask more questions on our existing permit, we will have to expend some more money to revise our online system to "reinvent the wheel". A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to revise our permit, using the Wild Rice Watershed district permit as a base to align with unmodified permit database that the district currently uses, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby will create a permit for approval and obtain a cost estimate for a permit database revision.

Swenby and Herrmann spent a fair amount of time this month reviewing the district Rules and Regulations. Swenby e-mailed a copy out to the managers throughout the month, with the tracked changes that Swenby and Herrmann proposed. Swenby highlighted a few of the major proposed changes which related to permit violation fees, tiling, and debris obstructions. The managers will review the rules with the changes that Herrmann and Swenby suggested and will bring comments to the next board meeting. The managers talked about the possibility of a special meeting to comb through the rules and regs, in a more details fashion.

8. ACTION ITEMS.

RCPP Planning: A landowner has asked the district to investigate possible holding sites on channel, or perhaps raising Little Andrew. Swenby has researched historical records to review the districts past investigations in this area. She asked Wilkens for a history, and he stated that a full evaluation of the area was done years ago and was deemed unfeasible. Preliminary research indicates that the district started this and called it Project #6. The records she shows date back to the 80's, and our bookkeeping system doesn't go back that far, but Wilkens recollected a cost of about \$14,000 to the district for investigations. After talking with Herrmann, there is a small slew upstream of Little Andrew, and it was discovered that this area was never evaluated. She asked Herrmann if this location were ever on the radar during the RCPP process, and he said no, but it could be, just using LiDAR. Swenby asked if the board was interested in moving forward to direct Herrmann to evaluate this area and other smaller areas on along Kittleson, understanding that the district would pay about 15% of the costs if completed by May 31. A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to authorize Herrmann to move forward with investigations of the area in question for storage opportunities and drainage area evaluations using the funding opportunities through the RCPP planning efforts, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

Discussion was held about moving forward with an alternative to provide community flood control to Beltrami, MN. The board felt that it was valuable to develop a conceptual plan to assist the City in future funding requests from the legislature. Herrmann felt this could be accomplished using LiDAR data to get a concept level cost estimate for budgeting purposes. The board also discussed engaging the City of Beltrami Council to explain why the Board felt this project is important to the District. Herrmann thought that potential insurance premium increases due to the new FEMA regulatory 100-yr floodplain would help to express the need. The Board would like to move forward with a special meeting between the Beltrami City Council and the SHRWD Board of Managers to discuss the project. Swenby explained that in her most recent conversations with the City, she was told that the City had a couple of new council members and the delay was related to getting them better acquainted. She also stated that the result of prior meetings was that the City was delaying their interest until the new census numbers were reported, in hopes that the local share to the City would be less. A was made by **Motion** by Manager Engelstad to direct Herrmann to complete a concept design and cost estimate ahead of the special meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre. **The Motion was Carried.**

9. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers were given written information/highlights relating to other agency meetings and upcoming events such as the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, MAWD, Drainage Work Group, and the Red River Watershed Management Board.

10. PERMITS:

One permit was brought before the board. It is a permit that was tabled from 2020 due to lack of information. Herrmann has reviewed the permit and suggests approving the permit.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve the following permit, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad **The Motion was carried.**

Manager Andringa suggested that written documentation be sent to JR Dale verifying that this was a permit violation, as the work was verbally admitted complete before a permit was approved.

20-054 – JR Dale – Liberty Twp. Section 35 – Install Tile

As a reminder Swenby informed the board that the district still has one permit from 2020 that is waiting for approval. It is for Hubbard Township, Section 13. The Township/landowners are still working with adjacent landowners to obtain a signature for raising the road to the desired height.

Swenby informed the board that she is meeting April 6 with the Township and the landowners involved to resolve the apprehension on the permit.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held Wednesday, April 6, 2021 at 8 AM. As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to adjourn the meeting at 11:32 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

JJ Hamre, Secretary