



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: JANUARY 8, 2026

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the January 8, 2026, meeting to order at 8 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Don Andringa, Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson and Shawn Brekke. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator, Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others attendance included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL:

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

3. OATH OF OFFICE:

Todd Peterson was sworn in and took the Oath of Office as a Manager of the Sand Hill River Watershed District. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to accept Manager Peterson's Oath of office, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

4. REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD:

Annual reorganization of the Board was conducted. Chairman Christian turned the meeting over to Manager Andringa who asked for nominations for **Chairman of the Board**. Manager Bartz nominated Manager Christian for Chair. Nominations were called for three times by Manager Andringa. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Stuart Christian for Chairman by Manager Brekke **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**. Manager Andringa returned the chair to Chairman Christian.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Vice Chairman** of the Board. Manager Brekke nominated Manager Andringa for Vice Chairman. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Andringa for Vice Chairman by Manager Brekke, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Secretary of the Board**. Manager Andringa nominated Manager Brekke for Secretary. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Manager Brekke for Secretary by Manager Andringa, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Treasurer** of the Board. Manager Andringa nominated Manager Bartz for Treasurer. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Manager Bartz for Treasurer by Manager Andringa **Seconded** by Manager Brekke, **Carried**.

Manager Brekke made a **Motion** for the following: That the Fertile Journal is designated as the official newspaper of the SHRWD. That the following financial institutions be designated as official depositories for SHRWD funds: Red River State Bank of Fertile and Old National of Detroit Lakes, MN. That the District's consulting engineering firm is Houston Engineering, PO Box 5054, Fargo, ND. That the attorney for the District is John Kolb, Rinke Noonan, St. Cloud, MN. That mileage for District business is reimbursable at a per mile rate coinciding with the allowable IRS mileage rate. That manager per diem is set at \$40 per hour with a maximum daily total of \$125.00 per meeting as prescribed by State law. **Seconded** by Manager Peterson, **Carried**.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to authorize Stuart Christian, Clayton Bartz, and April Swenby as the current financial and representative signers and keeping Donna Bjerk a financial signer for the Red River State Bank account, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to appoint April Swenby and Donna Bjerk as an authorized signer to the Business Rewards Credit card with FCCU giving Bjerk and Swenby the ability to use the assigned credit card on behalf of the district, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson, **Carried.** Credit card charges are always listed on the bills to be paid individually for the managers to review each month. Both meeting minutes and one signature are required for any future signature additions/removals to this credit card.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke authorizing the April Swenby and Clayton Bartz as authorized representatives regarding the Membership Savings account and credit card listing them on the entity authorization form, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa, **Carried.**

For informational purposes, Swenby reminded the managers of the following which are regulated by the credit card company:

1. One signature is required to withdraw funds from the Reward Savings account at First Community Credit Union.
2. One signature is also required to open/close any accounts with First Community Credit Union.
3. When new employees or new Treasurers represent the Sand Hill Watershed District, proper documentation will need to be reflected for the credit card.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke authorizing April Swenby and Donna Bjerk as authorized representatives regarding the Sam's Club Credit card listing both on the entity authorization form, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson, **Carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to set the regular board meeting for 2026 for the first Thursday of every month at 8 AM, except for October and December 2026 which was set for October 8 and December 10 at 8 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke, **Carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to set the beaver bounty at \$125 per beaver, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson, **Carried.** The program will not change for townships and their portion will remain at \$10.

4. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2025, meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

5. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Swenby explained that the report presented is a draft. Ditch funds have final year end interest allocation entries still remaining. Swenby recommends postponing approval of a final Treasurer's Report. Swenby directed the managers attention to the draft which included a report prior to entries made closing out various funds to start the new year, and post entries to start the new year. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke table the approval of the December 2025 Treasurer Reports until 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.

April J. Swenby	493.64
Bear Park Township	345.00
Brandner Printing	28.45
City of Fertile	72.98
EcoLab	60.88
Fertile Hardware Hank	145.06
Fertile Journal	153.00

Garden Valley Telephone Company	330.95
H2Over Viewers	32,201.73
Houston Engineering	27,415.45
Joe Cyr	250.00
Lakes Community Cooperative	148.69
Liberty Township	1,150.00
Mid Valley Electric	4,021.98
Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust	6,860.00
Otter Tail Power Company	143.05
Red River Watershed Mgmt Board	2,434.62
Rinke-Noonan	6,222.00
Todd's Landscaping	65.00
Vineland Twp.	1,495.00
Wild Rice Electric	244.56
TOTAL	<u>84,282.04</u>

Swenby drew to the attention of the managers two bills on the report for Houston Engineering written with a December 31, 2025 date, noting that those two bills were included in the calendar year 2025 due to grant reimbursements. She informed the board that those checks have been cut, but are being held until the board has formally approved them, but are reflected on the bills to be paid.

The credit card statement was not received this month and Swenby has requested a duplicate statement. To avoid late fees, Swenby would like to pay that when it is received, but will work with the Treasurer to review the statement before it is paid.

Manager Peterson disclosed a conflict of interest, stating that he is paid via Todd's Landscaping for snow removal by the district. After discussion, no conflict of interest was determined for voting purposes to authorize payment of bills as Todd's Landscaping has been contracted for years for snow removal and has been servicing the district long before his appointment as manager.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$84,282.04 and approves the payment of the credit cards statement pending the Treasurer's review if necessary to avoid additional fees, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

6. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

IRS Mileage Rate: The rate for 2026 has increased to \$72.5/mile.

H2Over Re-cap: Swenby is working with Bryan Murphy for a recap to bring Manager Peterson up to date on the SH Ditch redetermination of benefits (ROB). Manager Peterson will hear the same presentation that the Managers and landowners were all given, and he will answer any questions to ensure that Peterson is fully educated about the ROB. Swenby asked if there were any managers who would like to be a part of this for a recap, noting that it has been a long time since there has been board education on this topic. All managers would like the option to be included in this education if possible. Swenby will notice all managers and post this education session/presentation for the public.

Drainage Conference: The managers were provided an invite for the annual drainage conference. Swenby noted that this is an excellent conference and a great opportunity to hear all things drainage and the legal responsibilities of the watershed. Swenby and Manager Peterson will be attending all but the last day – as the Project Team meeting interferes with the last day of this event.

2025 Annual Audit: The district audit is scheduled for March. An engagement letter will be forthcoming.

MAWA: At the last MAWA meeting in December, Swenby was nominated to serve on the Executive Committee for Mn Watersheds MAWA. This committee meets monthly – all virtually. She will serve initially as the Secretary. She will also still serve on the Handbook, Strategic Planning, and Communications Committee for Mn Watersheds.

FEMA 2022 Damages Update: After the meeting with FEMA in November, Herrmann has confirmed he will have a complete mitigation plan to present to them the end of January. Swenby will work with Herrmann to schedule that meeting.

Advisory Committee: Swenby provided an attendance roster of the current Sand Hill Advisory Committee from the past five years, noting that attendance from landowners has been scarce. Twenty landowners reside on the committee and in 2025, only four were present. Ten additional landowners from east to west in the Sand Hill River Watershed District were suggested to Swenby to ask if they are interested in serving. After she has called to see if they are interested, she will present a new list in February for the board to approve. Swenby will also call the existing committee members to determine if they are still interested in serving. She suggested that personal contact to each committee member may be helpful to encourage future attendance and engagement.

A proposal from Swenby was discussed where the board might utilize the Advisory Committee to consider transition planning for future board retirees. Swenby asked the board to consider the future and take steps to ensure we have prepared managers to lead the district into the future. Swenby felt the best way to prepare for future retiree vacancies is to ensure there is an active Advisory Committee. While not always the case, it has been the practice that managers start as an Advisory Committee member before they are appointed to serve on the actual board as a good stepping stone. Swenby stated that she has been working with County officials to develop defined criteria for appointees and a definition of expectations. The statute requires that the only stipulation for serving is residency of the district. She believes that defined expectations/criteria may be helpful for potential candidates.

The board held a discussion on how to utilize the Advisory Committee to prepare future and prospective board managers. Zoom meeting invitations, meeting packet distribution and conference attendance were some ideas.

The role of the Advisory Committee was discussed stating its statutory role is Advisory to the Board of managers. Historically, the Advisory Committee has provided input to Polk County for board appointments, however that is a courtesy entertained by the County. It is not a legal role. It was suggested that the Advisory Committee may be called to evaluate decisions that evolve from the project team's direction.

7. ENGINEER'S REPORT

Project # 5 Outlet Stabilization (WBIF): Herrmann's team performed the field survey data for the conceptual design.

SH Ditch- FEMA 2022 Damages: Herrmann is working through a mitigation plan that will not result in redundant work that will complement any capital improvement projects resulting from the project team efforts. Herrmann plans to have this ready to present by the end of January to FEMA.

Project Team: The Project Team will meet on January 29, 26. Herrmann refreshed the board on the outcomes of the project to date.

8. ACTION ITEMS.

LOMA: A LOMA was requested by Mike Corbo for his property located at 35198 390th Street SW in Climax. **A Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to perform the LOMA as requested, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Rinke-Noonan Retainer: Swenby explained a retainer with Rinke-Noonan covers simple inquiries and verbal and written opinions general in nature for the District Board and its staff. This allows the cost of such advice to be defrayed over the course of the month. Due to the nature and brevity of these inquiries and responses, billing statement entries for the retainer file will not be as detailed as statements for hourly service files regarding specific matters and proceedings. Work performed outside of the scope of the flat monthly retainer fee will be billed within individual matter files according to the discounted hourly rates for government clients.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke continue with Rinke-Noonan for a monthly retainer for \$2,400 per year, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Capital Grants and Aid: Last month the board briefly discussed brick maintenance on the existing building. All managers were e-mailed an update on findings with the historical society.

Swenby provided information for a potential Capital Grants and Aid grant. To parallel with the grant, the district would be required to hire a historical architect to draft construction documents for the work needed. YHR would provide construction documents at an hourly rate, not to exceed \$8,000 for the documents. If awarded, the grant would provide a 50/50 cost share for the repair work highlighted in the construction documents. The district would pay 100% of the preparation of the construction documents. The board questioned the necessity of the construction documents, noting that the work needed was tuck joints and acid washing. Additionally, it is possible that the scope of work may change and increase the cost of the repairs to fulfill historical society requirements. The deadline to apply is January 23, 2026.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to pass on the capital grants and aid opportunity at this time, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

2. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from the Drainage Work Group.

3. PERMITS:

No permits were brought before the board.

4. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held February 5, 2026, at 8 AM. As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to adjourn the meeting at 10:54 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary