

SAND HILL RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

February 7, 2017

1. **Attendance:** Chairman Stuart Christian called the February 7, 2017 to order at 8:08 AM at the District Office. Other managers present were Scott Balstad, JJ Hamre, Roger Hanson and Phillip Swenson. Two staff members were present: Daniel Wilkens – Administrator and April Swenby – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance: Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering, Mike Skaug – Landowner, Bill Downs – Landowner.
2. **Approval of the Agenda:** A **Motion** was made by Manager Hanson to approve the agenda as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.
3. **Minutes:** A **Motion** was made by Manager Hanson to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2017 meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Balstad, **Carried**.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** A **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad to approve the treasurer's report for January, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

The managers reviewed their expense reports and reported on activities for the month. A **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad, to approve and pay bills, except for the SWCD balances which are listed for informational purposes only, **Seconded** by Manager Swenson, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

5. Engineer's Report

Climax Ring Dike: Houston Engineering continues to work on obtaining easements. The punch list items discussed in previous months will continue in the spring.

Rock Riffles: Swenby, Herrmann and the SWCD submitted a grant reimbursement request in January.

There was interest in expanding the riffle project and use the excess funds to cover the financial cost. After snowmelt, additional conversations will take place to determine the best place for utilizing the excess funds. Additional permitting will be required if the project is expanded.

The district received recognition at the RRBC conference in the Basin Success Story feature of the conference for the Rock Riffle Project. Herrmann gave a great presentation on the project.

Fish Passage, US Corp. Drop Structures: Herrmann gave an update to new Manager Hamre on where the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Funding Grants comes from to cost share in this project and what items made us qualify for this grant.

BWSR Clean Water Fund: Manager Balstad asked if there were opportunities to use these funds for Ditch # 122. Herrmann explained that we tried a couple of years ago, Herrmann will research other funding opportunities. Manager Balstad suggested asking both SWCD's to get on board with fixing the area. Herrmann said this type of funding occurs more during the summer application time, but he will have these conversations with both SWCD's. Herrmann will research the possibilities of sediment basins in the area to help slow the water down if there are sites available.

Carlson Coulee: Construction is still planned for summer/fall of 2017, depending on permitting.

BWSR Funding – Sediment Control Basins in East Polk SWCD area: Herrmann updated Hamre on this project and the grant opportunity that was awarded.

FEMA flood plain map: Herrmann thinks there might be an opportunity for Manager Hamre to apply for a LOMA to remove his property from the flood plain, just like the district did with the other three properties near Beltrami. Herrmann will do an inventory for other areas that might be wrongfully in the floodplain and he will reach out to MN DNR to see if the districts comments were considered.

Project # 24: Dave Hauff has drafted a letter to distribute to each of the parties to explain the situation. After he receives a response Hauff will then need to decide as to what course of action to pursue. Herrmann has developed a timeline of what occurred and it is as follows:

December 27, 2010 - Land Sale occurred

January 6, 2011 – The Land Sale was recorded at the Polk County Government Center.

July 14, 2011 – Houston asked Polk County for land ownership information so we could pay for right of way.

The data that Houston Engineering received in July did not include the land sale in question. Herrmann will converse with Michelle Cote - Polk County Auditor/Treasurer as to why incorrect information was given in July.

Redetermination of Benefits: Herrmann presented maps of the projects. Using Lidar elevation data and high resolution aerial photos, Herrmann was able to develop preliminary cost estimates to purchase the buffer strips and do the redeterminations for the following systems: Polk County Ditch # 9, Polk County Ditch # 119, and SHRWD Project # 5, (the consolidation of Norman County # 2 and Polk County # 17)

The district agreed to hold an informational meeting with the landowners on each system before moving forward with the redetermination process. The board would like to schedule this, following our March board meeting starting at 10:00 AM.

Ditch ROW: Wilkens would like to send reminder letters to the landowners along our ditch systems informing them that the district has put up more ROW markers and that we ask their cooperation on maintaining the Buffer strips along the project ROW. If there are violations the district must take action by state statute.

Polk County Ditch #80: An informational meeting will be held at the same time as Polk County Ditch # 9, Polk County Ditch # 119 because it is the same area with a lot of the same landowners and has tentatively set a time of 11 AM on March 13. Because Project No. 5 is in a different area with different landowners it was felt this informational meeting should be held in the afternoon that day at 2 PM.

Mike Skaug asked about adding a ditch on south one half of the west side of the east north south road in section 26 of Russia Township to the project so it will drain. The board suggested that due to the limited local drainage he would be better off to clean the ditch himself. The engineer will look at this area to make sure that an adequate outlet is available. The engineer will also look at the drainage in the NE corner of this section which drains to ditch # 119.

6. Dan's Monthly Report

RRWMB: The RRWMB met on January 17 in in Moorhead. Meeting highlights were given to the managers. The RRWMB is asking for each watershed districts to submit their suggestions of services that the RRWMB can provide to the districts. The managers created the following list:

1. Designated facilitators for project teams familiar with the mediation agreement
2. Grant Services assistance to the districts
3. Web site cost sharing increase

The managers also stated that they'd like to see more financial accountability within the RRWMB organization and justification for expenses.

Swenby will submit the comments by the deadline.

RRBC Commission: The annual RRBC Commission conference was held January 17 to the 19 in Fargo at the Ramada Inn. Swenby, Wilkens, and Manager Hanson attended.

DWG: The last meeting was held January 12, 2017 in St. Paul at the Farmers Union Bldg. Meeting highlights were given to the managers.

Buffer Meeting: There was a meeting held January 30, 2017 at the Polk County Highway Department to discuss the new buffer law. Swenby, Wilkens, Manager Balstad and Manager Swenson attended. Meeting Minutes/Notes were given to the managers. The entities present decided to request Tom Gile, BWSR, to give a presentation at the Public Informational Meetings tentatively scheduled to be held in McIntosh, Crookston and East Grand Forks, in the month of February. Josh Holte along with Rich Sanders will be meeting with the County Commissioners at their scheduled board meeting, February 7, 2017 at 8:50 AM to inform and discuss compliance, non-compliance and amendments to the local shore land ordinance once current legislation is finalized as to enforcement and possible incentives regarding local jurisdiction.

Hovland Marsh: The DNR has received a permit for the water control structure. A copy of the permit was given to the managers. Comments are due by 3-2-17. Wilkens contacted Stephanie Klamm February 1, 2017 and expressed displeasure with the procedure. The district will comment requesting the DNR to work with the adjacent Landowner to rectify the issues relating to this project. Swenby will draft a letter reflecting the position of the district.

7. Other Business:

Public Relations: The managers reviewed possible public relations items. No new information was brought before the board.

Next Board Meeting: The managers discussed the upcoming March meeting and manager and staff scheduling conflicts. It was determined that the meeting will be held on March 13, 2017 at 8:00 am. A **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad authorizing Swenby to pay the bills that are normally due at the beginning of March to not incur late fees, **Seconded** by Manager Hanson, **Carried**. The managers will review the bills paid at the March 13 meeting.

Section 15 – Mike Skaug: Mike Skaug has asked the district to submit comments asking for additional review for a 50-foot buffer requirement in Section 15 of Reis Township along Polk County Highway # 1. Herrmann will review the files to determine what comments the district submitted and follow up with the MN DNR to determine what was considered.

Manager Balstad also asked Herrmann to review Ditch #133 as well.

Document Management Project: Swenby gave a presentation on the filing and scanning project she has been working on. The presentation showed the detail within the software and how each paper

the district owns is scanned, indexed, titled, and stored in the appropriate folder. The individual records within the software provides the same amount of detail as each box in the vault so that users will be able to find exactly what they are looking for. In addition to presenting the progress, Swenby highlighted the amount of work that is left to do to complete the project. She reported that in addition to filing, scanning, and indexing historical records, she has been able to maintain the current files that have already been scanned and filed on a weekly basis. The managers are allowed access to any of these files and can track progress remotely with their own private log-ins if they choose to use the software.

Swenby reminded the managers that she tries to dedicate about 8 days per month to this project and the records retention goals of the district. Some months are more, some months are less. For example, the month of January (year-end) she was only able to spend 2 days. On average, Swenby estimated that she spends 4 – 6 hours per week maintaining new records and keeping the scanning current on the files that have been completed. Her priority each week still resides with what her initial job description entails, which is three days a week as the Administrative Assistant.

The managers asked the percentage of the project completed. Swenby estimated that about 75% of the vault records have been sorted, organized, and filed in tubs. Swenby estimated that about 10% - 15% of what has been filed is scanned. Forty years of data/records is being sorted, organized, filed, scanned and indexed for preservation. Progress is being made, but this will be an ongoing project.

Swenby also invited the managers to review her timesheet anytime, as she has documented her time daily and records where her time is spent.

Financial Records Management: Swenby also informed the managers that because the desktop scanner is available, QuickBooks allows for digital document management and as of the first of the year, the district's finances are all digitized. This requires extra work throughout the month, but it provides additional transparency for the auditors who will be able find the back up for every transaction within the software and it provides ease of access to historical records. Accessing financial records will be a time saver for end of the year reporting and grant reimbursement request submissions, just to name a few. All transactions will have backup located within QuickBooks including copies of all checks deposited and their breakdowns, every invoice, every bank statement and every investment statement. Digitizing our finances also provides a back-up stored in the cloud vs. only being stored on a paper copy in the vault downstairs.

River Recreation on the Sand Hill River: Last summer, Swenby created a Facebook page for kayaking on the Sand Hill River. Wayne Goeken volunteered to help maintain the page, to inform people of safe padding levels and river conditions as well as to promote river recreation on the Sand Hill. Swenby and Goeken have had many conversations on how to promote river recreation, encourage safety and to promote the mission statement of the Sand Hill River Watershed District (managing water resources in a manner which sustains and enhances the social, economic and natural resources of the District). Goeken has submitted an idea brief on behalf of the district to the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (the group based at UMC where Linda Kingery is the Executive Director)

The managers were given a copy of the grant proposal that was submitted which will be taken up for review at their upcoming Natural Resources Work Group meeting. They may deem it to also (or instead of) to go to their Tourism & Resilient Communities Work Group.

In summary, the proposal included:

- SHRWD develop means to share useful information about safe paddling on the Sand Hill River, e.g. water levels, access points, tree snags, fences, other conditions. Likely use website(s)--SHRWD, AELC, City of Fertile, Facebook, and other social media.
- Provide information about access points, trip distances, trip planning considerations (could be river recreation page on SHWD website)
- Provide coordination support for community paddle events--primarily in Fertile area, but also upstream in Winger/Rindahl area with support of Fertile Community Conservation Club. Enlist support of other community groups/individuals
- Develop/implement means of evaluating increased recreation use of the Sand Hill River as well as remembrances of past use and ideas/suggestions for future use.
- Though not explicitly part of NRSDP proposal, it is mentioned that the SHRWD will also coordinate tree snagging to enhance safe passage--need to discuss extent of this.
- Also, consideration of demonstration of the alternative fencing option that is being used in Canada during the RRBC Conference.

Swenby asked the managers for consideration of a River Explorers day sponsored by the Sand Hill River Watershed District for the summer of 2017 depending on river levels. A **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad to sponsor a River Explorer's Day, **Seconded** by Manager Hanson, **Carried**. Swenby will meet with Wayne Goeken to develop a plan and present a budget to the managers.

Options were also discussed about the River Clean Up and grant funding for cleaning up tree snags on the Sand Hill River from Erickson's to the Lehman Bridge. A **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad to use the River Clean up funds up to \$4,000 to clean the river where deemed necessary, **Seconded** by Manager Hanson, **Carried**. Swenby will continue to pursue grants to complete cleaning the river.

Drone and video usage: Houston Engineering will develop a cost estimate to create a video of a couple of projects using their drone for PR use to show the benefits of the projects in an aerial and animated view.

Building Upgrades: The manager asked Wilkens to get an estimate for a roof, bathrooms, handicapped accessible, heating, cooling and ventilation. The managers agreed that cold storage should be put on hold at this time.

Grant Applications: Manager Hanson asked about grant applications and applying for them independently. Herrmann stated that there are some to be applied for in the installation of side inlet pipes.

Priorities for 2017: Wilkens submitted his list of priorities for the upcoming year. They are as follows:

Redetermination:

1. Redetermination of Benefits for ditches 5, 9, 119
2. Sand Hill Ditch redetermination of benefits

Improvement of Ditch Systems:

1. Improvement of ditch 80

Office:

1. Update web site (Permit Database and Historic Project Descriptions from Houston Engineering)
2. Update Rule and Regulations (Tiling)
3. Building Upgrades, building roof, handicap addition with bathrooms, new heating and cooling system upgrades, new sewer line and vent, carpet and ceiling
4. Continue Filing/Scanning Project
5. Succession Planning
6. One Watershed/One Plan

Project Business:

1. Dave Aarends ROW
2. Vesledahl establishment of a legal system
3. LID easements
4. Ditch inspections this spring
5. FEMA maps
6. Buffer strips (Alternative Practices)
7. Spokely Potato Washing Plant Oversight

Project Construction:

1. Project # 17 Ditch Slough by highway # 9
2. Project # 27 LID lake level gauge install
3. Project # 19 Erosion control by Paul Proulx, EPSWCD coordination
4. Project # 24 Outlet at Bill Brekke
5. Project # 11 Beltrami Diversion, Culvert by sub-station, trap or block
6. Carlson Coulee project construction
7. Rock Riffles continuation with left over funds and construction
8. COE fish passage oversite
9. All Ditch systems, Buffer compliance, Spraying and mowing
10. After inspection, some systems will need cleaning or repairs.
11. Nielsville Ring Dike
12. PL566 Projects (Upper Detention Projects)

The Managers asked for a commitment from the administration to proceed with the above tasks.

8. **Permits:** No permits were brought before the board.
9. **Adjournment:** The next regular meeting will be held **MONDAY at 8:00 AM on March 13, 2017 (March 7, 2017 there is a conflict with schedules)** As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Balstad to adjourn the meeting at 12:53 PM, **Seconded** by Manager Swenson **Carried**.