



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: APRIL 11, 2023

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the April 11, 2023, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad, Don Andringa and Shawn Brekke. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering, Rob Sip – RRWMB, Greg Holmvik – RRWMB, and John David Swanson, - Landowner.

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:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2023, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Swenby asked the managers to refer to the reconciled Treasurer’s Report for the month of March (e-mailed to managers ahead of meeting). The Treasurer’s Report for March was presented. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and dispense the reading of the Treasurer’s Report for March, **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	268.55
City of Fertile	58.24
EcoLab	53.57
First Community Credit Union	364.45
Garden Valley Telephone Company	110.58
Houston Engineering	21,469.40
Otter Tail Power Company	652.18
Polk County Fair (Booth Rental)	125.00
Sam's Club	450.61
Sarah Wise	48.00
Todd's Landscaping	430.00
Wild Rice Electric	137.23
YHR Partners	7,799.20
TOTAL	<u>31,967.01</u>

An additional bill for Eco Lab for \$53.57 was added this morning to the bills to be paid report.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$32,020.58 **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

5. RRWMB PRESENTATION.

Rob Sip, Executive Director presented an overview of the RRWMB and its recent activities, highlighting the services they provide for member districts, LiDAR, legislative updates, the Drainage Work Group, and the RRWMB Water quality program.

6. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

One Watershed One Plan: The Policy and the Advisory Committee met on March 14, 2023. The Steering Committee met on March 15. Meeting information was presented to the board. The Advisory Committee was presented the 2022 monitoring results from MPCA. The objectives of the Advisory Committee were to review and make comments/revisions on the issues section of the plan and recommend to the Policy Committee. The Advisory Committee reviewed the draft version of the goals that the Steering Committee has been working on and were able to provide comments. The Policy Committee approved the measurable goals that were presented and the priority issues. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee and the Policy Committee is May 9.

Swenby stated that she and Herrmann have been working on the district's Capitol Improvement listing for the plan. Swenby would like feedback to ensure that we have covered all the areas that the district may foresee in the upcoming 10 years. The managers did not offer changes to what was presented.

Additionally, Swenby asked for direction regarding the future feasibility for the Sediment Basin Program, given that the SWCD will now have 1W1P funds to implement those programs, keeping in mind that our strategic planning that was done recently. Swenby would like to know where the boards see the Sand Hill Watershed District funding for such programs and if that is in our wheelhouse moving forward when the plan is complete. Manager Engelstad suggested that language be used that doesn't limit the watershed, should they want to contribute to sediment basins. The managers will continue this discussion in the future.

The Steering Committee will meet again on April 19.

Drainage Work Group: In the managers packet (Other Agency Section) is a video file from the House hearings on the Drainage Portal. About 1:04 into the video you will see the hearing and the arguments on the HF2354. MN Watersheds and a county board member represented opposition to the bill and urged the House to send the bill back to the Drainage Work Group to deliberate. Several regulatory organizations spoke in favor of it, noting that there is no statutory requirement for the Drainage Work Group. Representative Heitzman spoke in favor of the Drainage Work Group process. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

FEMA Funding: The FEMA appeal was submitted and is available in Board Effect. There is a 2nd appeal process, if this is denied.

Rules and Regulations: Swenby compiled all of the comments from the managers into one document and they were reviewed. Several questions are awaiting attorney responses.

Norman/Polk Project Team (WRWD): The Norman/Polk Project Team meeting scheduled for March 22 was cancelled. The next one is scheduled for April 26 and Swenby plans on attending, to represent the district, in the event that there is an interest in the southern boundary of the watershed district or alternatives that affect our watershed.

Westerly Drainage: The public meeting in Crookston was held on March 28 at the Government Center. There was discussion about the process of improving county ditch systems and the process for transferring them to the watershed. Landowners in attendance were directed to the watershed should that be an avenue they'd like to pursue.

Building Project (District Office): Swenby met with the architect and a local contractor on March 15, 2023. Proposed changes included simplifying the language in the plan, removing the 2nd access to the basement, shingles vs. steel roofing, removing the sidewalk on the west side, and a possible west straight wall.

Vesledahl Wetland Mitigation Landowner Meeting: The landowner meeting will be held April 14, 2023, at the Winger Community Center at 3 PM.

FYI – BWSR Manager Training: BWSR is going to be offering Manager training again this year and they are planning to take place in June and July. Swenby explained that this is directed at board managers and is great training.

Flood Outlook: Swenby attended the National Weather Service flood update. Attached in the Other Agency section of Board Effect is the collection of data that was presented. Most of the slides compared data from March 13 to data for March 27. In summary, we are at risk for spring flooding due to increased snowfall and delayed melt conditions. We are above average.

H2O Viewers: Swenby has been working with H2O Viewers to begin the discussions of what redetermination might look like on the Sand Hill Ditch. They would like to present it to the full board this summer.

Farmstead Ring Dike Program: New information has come out about the program relating to last month's discussion. The MnDNR wanted to make sure everyone understands that the DNR does not require participation of an engineer in preparing the funding application, nor do we require a survey at that stage and that it is entirely up to each district. The application form does ask for the expected cost of the project as part of justifying the requested funding. While a cost estimate will certainly be more reliable if you have a survey in hand and a preliminary design basis for estimating quantities, DNR does not require that you do it that way. They believe all the other questions on the application form can be answered readily by District staff working with a landowner. For those who do incur eligible costs while preparing the application: if the funding award is approved, then pre-application costs incurred up to 12 months prior can be used for meeting the non-State match requirements of the grant.

Spring Flooding: Dale Balstad called on behalf of Val Tuseth and would like to be proactive for flooding for her home that is adjacent to Ditch # 119. The idea is to be proactive for spring flooding as in the past, water has come within 10' of her home. In the past the SH Watershed District has given permission to landowners, on an as needed basis, to remove ice jams and snow from ditches to protect their property/homestead. Since Swenby has been Administrator she has given permission one other time, and that was along the SH Ditch, and it was to protect a homestead. Typically, Swenby hasn't given permission for ag land, for fear of liability and pushing the problem onto someone else. Balstad informed us that the RLWD performs this service for their legal systems.

Swenby called RLWD and WRWD to get information about their practices and they are as follows:

- RLWD: If flooding is to impact a homestead, the legal system does pay to clear the way to prevent flooding on the home. They do not do this for ag land. This is a practice they have done for years but have no formal policy.
- WRWD: The WRWD does not even grant permission for landowners/homestead, due to the liability and the possibility of impacting neighboring lands. They are aware that landowners do this, and there is no policy for prohibiting them, but permission does not come from the

watershed. They do not pay for the clearing of snow or ice jams, as the ditch system's legal responsibility is to function during rain events.

The managers agreed to keep the current practice of allowing permission to remove snow/ice as needed, but not funding the removal.

7. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

Kittleson Creek Storage: Herrmann re-presented the results of the hydraulic modeling in the Kittleson Creek area. Herrmann explained that he used available LiDAR data to identify potential sites. The identified sites were then incorporated into the watershed HEC-HMS model to evaluate their potential impacts to downstream flooding. The sites were reviewed based on their drainage area and potential performance for downstream flooding. Herrmann stressed that these sites are conceptual and should be considered as an example of how the location and timing of storage influences downstream flooding. Future development would require landowner input, additional feasibility review, and environmental review. John David Swanson, a local landowner who has expressed interest in the project, was in attendance. The conclusions using a conceptual level review is the following:

- Available storage relative to watershed size is limited.
- The sites can be operated to use storage during only periods of damaging floods.
- There is an opportunity to combine several sites to gain additional storage.
- On channel storage may be difficult to implement due to environmental concerns.
- These projects take a significant amount of time to develop.

Herrmann explained that there are two routes that the board can proceed forward with. One is the Project Team Process and the other is the NRCS Watershed Program.

Swenby explained that if a project is successful, the matter of future maintenance costs would need to be addressed. A water management district may need be established and those benefiting would be assessed for maintenance of this project. She suggested that the board also consider this as they are considering what continued investment they'd like to proceed forward with. Swenby offered them three options to consider:

1. Proceed forward with the Project Team process at a 50% cost share.
2. Proceed forward with the PFIR Phase 1 with NRCS cost share. NRCS would likely provide most/all of funding for Phase 1, with Watershed expense of any local involvement.
3. Cease pursuing a watershed project.

8. ACTION ITEMS.

There were no action items presented to the board.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from MAWD, National Weather Service, and Drainage Work Group.

10. PERMITS:

Three permits were presented to the board:

Permit 2023-008: Susan Steinmetz, Section 16, Heier Township, Insall Erosion Control Structure
Permit 2023-009: Reis Township, Section 8, Reis Township, Replace and upsize culvert.

Permit 2023-010: Reis Township, Section 23/26, Reis Township, Replace and upsize culvert, clean existing ditch.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke approve permits 2023-08 through 2023-010, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

11. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, May 4, 2023, 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 12:48 PM, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary