



**TITLE:** REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 2, 2023

## 1. ATTENDANCE:

Vice-Chairman Don Andringa called the February 2, 2023, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad, and Shawn Brekke. Managers absent included Stuart Christian. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann, Houston Engineering and Rachel Klein, EPSWCD Manager.

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Englestad to approve the agenda, with the addition of a request from the Agassiz Environmental Learning Center, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

## 3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2023, with a date correction, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

## 4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

The final Treasurer's Report for December was presented. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad approve the Treasurer's Report for December, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

The Treasurer's Report for January was presented. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad approve the Treasurer's Report for January, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Swenby noted that she has added a line item on the Treasurer's Report to show Boundary Revisions and made a journal entry to record the past year's expenses. She reminded the managers that about \$4,000 of that expense is expected from the RLWD, as agreed upon.

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

<b>April J. Swenby</b>	114.86
<b>City of Fertile</b>	49.33
<b>EcoLab</b>	53.57
<b>First Community Credit Union</b>	191.27
<b>Garden Valley Telephone Company</b>	607.19
<b>Houston Engineering</b>	27,877.86
<b>Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust</b>	4,214.00

Office Supplies Plus	140.30
Otter Tail Power Company	654.55
Sarah Wise	107.65
Todd's Landscaping	430.00
Wild Rice Electric	137.23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>34,577.81</u></b>

An additional bill was added for \$26.98 for Hardware Hank.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$34,604.79 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

## 5. SWCD:

Rachel Klein, EPSWCD Manager came before the board to discuss the partnership between the district and the EPSWCD for lake monitoring. She stated that the EPSWCD has moved away from being paid up front and instead invoicing the district yearly to better reflect actual costs, since the lab fees go up and down. Previously we had paid up front based on an estimate. In the newest contract for Sand Hill Lake and Kittleson that started in 2021, they changed that to being invoicing yearly since lab costs change every year.

She presented two contracts for monitoring lakes in the Sand Hill River Watershed District. One contract included lake monitoring for Union Lake and Lake Sarah, and the other included Union Lake, Lake Sarah, Uff Lake and Maltrud Lake. The three-year contract for two lakes is \$685.00 annually (estimated) and the estimated amount for four lakes is \$1,325.00. Samples included in the for monitoring include phosphorus, chlorophyll-a analysis, and clarity. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve monitoring the four lakes for \$1,325.00 annually, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

## 6. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

**January/February Activities:** Swenby reported that January was focused on end of the year reporting requirements and grant reporting requirements. She also informed the board that each week in February, Swenby will be attending some sort of conference indicating that February will be a busy travel month.

**One Watershed One Plan:** The Advisory Committee met on January 10. The Policy Committee followed this meeting and approved the vision statement. The Steering Committee will continue to work on measurable goals and action implementation in February/March.

**Sewer Gas Smell:** The district office sewer gas smell has been back in January. Swenby has called the city as two other businesses have the same smell at the same time. She asked them to have the City engineer look into it. Swenby has also called HN Plumbing to have them come and take another look in the district office. Manager Brekke offered to bring a drone to have a look at the sewer vent on top of the building.

**Building Project:** The bid opening is set for February 7, 2023, at 2 PM (there wasn't enough time to make it happen at the February 2 board meeting). After the opening, Swenby will e-mail the managers all the bid amounts and the architects will verify all bids align with the specifications. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to hold a meeting February 10 at 8:00 AM to review the bidding results, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**FEMA Funding:** Leadership has informed us that a Determination Memo is being prepared pertaining to the project. There are ineligibility issues pertaining to another federal agency possibly having jurisdiction over this project. Swenby is working on preparing for an appeal, and through that she is diligently working on locating origination documents that indicate the transfer of the SH Ditch to the Watershed District's jurisdiction.

**Drainage Work Group:** Swenby attended the Drainage Work Group meeting on January 12. In summary, the MnDNR has agreed to continue the discussion with the work group before presenting legislation for "early coordination". Swenby provided the documents discussed at the meeting, and a summary e-mail from MAWD.

**MN Watersheds (formerly MAWD) Committees:** Swenby provided a MN Watersheds committee listing document that explains the Governance Committee and the scope of work of the committees. Manager Andringa serves on a resolutions committee (Manager Engelstad is an alternate).

**Drainage Conference:** The Drainage Conference is February 8 & 9 in Alexandria. Swenby, Manager Andringa, and Manager Engelstad are registered to attend.

**Westerly Drainage:** Swenby and Herrmann met with Rich Sanders about the westerly drainage. It was decided that Polk County will hold a public meeting in Crookston on March 28 at the Government Center. Polk County will be the meeting lead. Because there is a strong possibility that the landowners would need technical information from a watershed perspective to help aid the discussion, Swenby would like Herrmann to attend that meeting and offer a technical perspective on the option of an improvement on Ditch 46. A small amount of technical information should be gathered ahead of time, to ensure we are prepared. Swenby suggests using the Data and Acquisition Fund to gather the information to prepare and present to the landowners, if needed. For Herrmann's attendance at the meeting Swenby suggests using the Water Management and Retention category – General Technical and Engineering category.

## 7. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

**Project 27 – Union/Sarah Lake Outlet:** Herrmann discussed replacing sandbag levee on USFWS property to prevent overflows into Crooked Lake. He reviewed with USFWS for concurrence and is still working on providing assistance with documentation required to modify the structure.

**Sand Hill Ditch:** The project is on hold until FEMA establishes eligibility. The data collected in the past few months by Houston Engineer through the FEMA process is still valuable and a worthwhile investment to the district, regardless if FEMA will reimburse for the expenses to evaluate the damages.

**MN 102 Boundary:** Herrmann discussed MN Highway 102 Area Boundary Revisions. The hydraulic modeling revisions based on plan revisions is complete. Herrmann provided updated documentation summarizing impacts to MNDOT and PCHD.

**Kittleson Creek Project Team:** Herrmann discussed funding opportunities to develop a project in the Kittleson Creek Watershed through the NRCS. The Watershed Operations program through NRCS has been funded in recent years, presenting an opportunity for project sponsors. The program is responsible for the Warren flood control project, as an example. The program is generally a three phased approach. The first phase is the Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) to determine if a project of federal interest exists within the planning watershed. The PIFR is fully funded and completed by the NRCS. There may be another option to self-fund complete the PIFR through the District. Herrmann felt that if this were an option, the PIFR could be completed using a project team process to use the available project team expense funding. This would allow for more local control and understanding in the PIFR process. He is still working with NRCS on options to complete the PIFR.

The second phase is to complete a Watershed Plan and Environmental Document. This phase is a comprehensive planning effort to define problems, vet alternatives based on cost feasibility, social, and environmental concerns, and identify the preferred alternative to carry forward. This is an intensive process intended to result in a project that can be implemented. The planning process will have to follow federal requirements, which includes an analysis of benefits and costs, agency coordination, and public input. Herrmann felt that this approach could be structured to meet the project team requirements. Prior discussions with NRCS have indicated that this could be 80% or more cost share from NRCS toward the planning effort.

The final phase is implementation and would require a completed Watershed Plan and federal funding allocation. The funding levels are variable depending on the projects purpose, but for an example Herrmann cited a recent project in North Dakota that is receiving nearly 80% federal investment in total project costs. Herrmann felt an ambitious timeline for successful implementation of a project through NRCS is 4-5 years.

Manager Andringa inquired about the work that's been done to date. Herrmann explained that to date, work has been completed using the prior RCPP funding to identify locations and evaluate impacts on flooding using the hydrology model. The intent of this effort was to provide value-added tools to the District for future planning efforts. Herrmann also cautioned that alternatives through the NRCS or project team process may result in alternatives substantially different than the traditional dam/impoundment project. When asked by the board, Herrmann cited the example enhancing floodplain storage through easements and stream restoration activities. He noted that the planning effort would identify what reasonable alternatives exist for the watershed.

Herrmann will continue to work with NRCS and report back to the Board at a later date.

## 8. ACTION ITEMS.

**Westerly Drainage:** Swenby suggested board action authorizing information to be gathered on the westerly drainage, gathering technical data on options available to landowners for the improvement of drainage, as staff sees applicable. Options for funding sources are the General Technical Engineering and Legal category (Water management fund) (Subd 3), or the Data and Acquisition fund (Subd. 8). Statutes were provided to the managers. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve authorizing Herrmann to assist in providing technical data, as staff sees applicable and using the appropriate fund for the work performed, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**River Watch Forum Support:** The International Water Institute and partners are hosting the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual River Watch Forum on March 1, 2023, at the Alerus Center, Grand Forks, ND. The River Watch Forum is held each spring to provide opportunities for over 200 students and teachers from throughout the Red River Basin to share their experiences with their peers and local water managers. In the past we have contributed \$780 (2018 was the last Forum). Managers were given the form for the options. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the Gold level \$1,500.00 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

**RRBC Support:** The Red River Basin Commission has requested \$5,000 in support. This amount is part of the Minnesota local base funding of the RRBC base budget which is equally provided by North Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba local governments. This local funding is match by the states and province. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve \$5,000 in support, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**Agassiz Environmental Learning Center:** The AELC is asking the Sand Hill River Watershed District if they would be interested in purchasing a bench with the district's name on it. The bench

would be placed along the trails/river in hopes to provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy the natural landscape of the Sand Hill River. Additionally, the bench would provide advertising year-round, for the district. The cost is \$1250.00 Plus lettering. A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve purchasing a bench **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** Manager Engelstad recused himself from voting.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from MAWD and Drainage Work Group.

## 10. PERMITS:

The following asking for drainage solutions that were tabled from last month have been rescinded from the applicants and no action is necessary:

- 2023-05: Stuart Christian, Section 30, 31, & 32, Liberty Township
- 2023-06: Raymond Christian family share trust, Section 29, Liberty Township
- 2023-07: Dwight Christian, 30, 31, & 32, Liberty Township

Recommend Approval

- 2023-01: Polk County Highway Department, Hammond Township Section 31, Install Culvert
- 2023-02: Polk County Highway Department, Hammond Township Section 33, Install Culvert
- 2023-03: Polk County Highway Department, Hammond Township Section 34, Install Culvert
- 2023-04: Polk County Highway Department, Hammond Township Section 32, Install Culvert

A **Motion** by Bartz to approve permits 2023-01 through 2023-04. **Seconded** by Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

## 11. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, March 2, 2023, at 8 AM. As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

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Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

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Shawn Brekke, Secretary