



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: MAY 4, 2023

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the May 4, 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, Gene Haugen and Richard Kroenig - Sletten Township.

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 Andringa to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2023, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

The Treasurer’s Report for April was presented. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and dispense the reading of the Treasurer’s Report for April, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **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	157.86
City of Fertile	58.72
First Community Credit Union	78.17
Garden Valley Telephone Company	257.50
Houston Engineering	10,528.33
Otter Tail Power Company	554.33
Polk County Auditor - Treasurer	3,180.00
Sarah Wise	48.00
Wild Rice Electric	280.73
TOTAL	<u>15,143.64</u>

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$15,143.64 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

One Watershed One Plan: The Steering Committee met on April 19. Last month Swenby asked for board feedback regarding Capitol Improvement listing she and Herrmann were working on, and there was discussion for the need of listing the Sediment Basin Program that is partnered with the SWCD's. Swenby e-mailed a response regarding the Sediment Basin Program and listing that program under Capitol Improvements. Based on the feedback, that program has been removed from the Capitol Improvement listing.

Rules and Regulations: Swenby provided the attorney response regarding the questions relating to the Rules and Regulations. The board discussed these responses. Swenby is still waiting on additional language for the rules.

Building Project (District Office): New plans were e-mailed to the managers. Swenby is awaiting feedback from a local contractor.

Vesledahl Wetland Mitigation Landowner Meeting: The landowner meeting was held April 14, 2023, at the Winger Community Center at 3 PM. Swenby provided the meeting notes to the board. Since the meeting, Swenby has heard from MnDOT who did some follow up on whether Trunk Highway dollars could be used to pay ditch assessments on this site. Because this property was purchased with State Road Construction dollars and they have a Commissioner's order from back in 2000, they are allowed use TH dollars on the site and can legally spend their operating allotment out of their TH distribution to pay for assessments. They will be discussing the possibility of supporting the establishment of a legal ditch system on this site with the watershed and MnDOT leadership soon. Swenby has reached out to a couple of landowners to continue the discussions of a landowner led legal ditch system, now that MnDOT has expressed interest in having a discussion about signing a legal ditch petition.

Spring Flooding: Swenby toured the west side of the district. Based on the tour and the phone calls of reported areas, she is keeping a running list. This is a document that will be changed as needed to keep herself on task to make sure problems are addressed. She provided the managers with the list she is maintaining.

WRWD Project Team: Swenby toured the area on April 14 with WRWD. The Norman/Polk Project Team meeting was held April 26, relating to the Southern Boundary of the watershed. The meeting was a platform for townships and landowners to provide information to the district. The watershed will be compiling all data from townships and landowners. A hydrologic model of the area is planned and that will be compared with known historical data, hoping to provide more information about the area and the impacts downstream. This will be used to develop solutions. The next meeting is planned for May 24.

District Audit: The district audit for 2022 has begun. Swenby will be working with the auditors for the Month of May to provide them with the needed information.

Project # 27/Union Lake Pumping: Last fall the district hired Joe Miller to clean the interconnect, and the district arranged with the landowner next to the interconnect that he would take the spoil as he wanted fill. This saved the system money, by not having to haul it away. A phone call was received this spring stating that the spoil was placed on the road and adjacent to the road and never moved. Swenby called the contractor, and he stated that the landowner told him to leave it there and he'd take care of it. In my conversations with the landowner, he said that he had intended to move it this spring when it dried out.

The district has no authority to store the dirt there, as it is outside the easement area. Swenby called Rolland Gagner (the owner of the land on which the dirt is still sitting), and he was good about it when she explained the communication that took place last fall. Gagner expressed interest in keeping the spoil for himself.

To correct the issue, Joe Miller moved the dirt this week and placed the dirt on Gagner's property. The ditch is on Gagner's property and dirt removed belongs to him and the landowner who originally asked for the dirt, understood, and acknowledged that the dirt shouldn't have been left where it was all winter, and agreed that if Gagner wants it, that would be fine.

Gagner also stated that he is planning on selling his home/property. The cleaning shed light on the easement that is currently in place, which is a 26' easement from the center line, leaving 13' on either side of the ditch to work. Swenby has been working on securing a larger easement for this area that allows a contractor to work, and place spoil. Swenby would like to get this done while Gagner still owns the property. She is working with Gagner. Herrmann will provide recommendations on how many more feet we should move forward with.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

Project # 17: A draft plan has been developed for the erosion at the outlet.

Project # 27: Herrmann is still coordinating with USFWS.

Kittleson Creek Storage: Herrmann presented the funding options for Kittleson Creek Watershed. The three options available to the board are:

1. Initiate a federal planning process through the NRCS Watershed Program.
2. Proceed with the Project Team process (non-federal).
3. Cease planning in the watershed.
- 4.

The federal planning process would be initiated with the Watershed District submitting a request to NRCS, and if accepted, the Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility Report (PIFR) would be the first step in that process. This would provide a high-level review using existing data to assess if, and what, a federal interest project may exist. After this step, the NRCS Watershed Planning approach would answer the same questions as the non-federal project team process, with a few additional hoops to go through including economic review.

The Board discussed problems within the watershed and the anticipate obstacles to permitting. The primary problems within the watershed are channel incision along the Kittleson Creek with limited flood damages to crop land. On-channel storage may provide a means to reduce flows in the channel and provide an opportunity for irrigation as an ancillary benefit. Given the nature of the primary problem, justifying on-channel storage instead of other measures may be difficult to attain a permit. Herrmann cautioned the Board that whichever option is selected, the Board should anticipate an alternative that looks different than what's been discussed in the past. Herrmann then discussed ensuring that the purpose of the Board taking action in the Kittleson Watershed is aligned with the primary focus areas from the strategic plan.

The primary concern of the Board is what will be allowable to attain a public waters work permit from the MN DNR. Herrmann recommended that he ensure that this will be answered through the NRCS PIFR process and come with a recommendation for the June board meeting.

MN 102 Boundary: Herrmann provided a technical memo summarizing the impacts to MnDOT and PCHD.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

AELC Education Program: The AELC has submitted a proposal for a partnership for watershed education. A proposal was provided to the managers proposing a partnership to help bring watershed education to the youth of the watershed district. Swenby explained that the district does have a watershed education responsibility and has earmarked that out in our Strategic Plan. With

limited staffing in the district, this is great way to fill the void. The cost to the district for one year is \$6,661 and it includes 84% of the following budget:

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
\$1,279	Education Supplies-Terrestrial
\$2,771	Education Supplies-Aquatic
\$955	4th Grade school expenses: transportation
\$1,210	4th Grade school expenses: program fee
\$605	4th Grade school expenses: Discovery Kits
\$320	Community Program
\$800	<u>Kayak Programs: 4 @ \$200 ea</u>
\$7,940	TOTAL

This program will serve all four schools in our school district and the home school programs within our district.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to partner with the AELC for watershed education in the amount of \$6,661 for the school year 23-24, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The motion was carried.** Manager Engelstad recused himself from voting.

Sediment Basin Program: Swenby asked the board if they foresee the Sediment Basin Program continuing after the One Watershed One Plan is complete and if they see the watershed district as a financial contributor to the sediment basins was, we have done in the past to help support the SWCD initiatives. For planning purposes, Swenby wanted to know if this program will continue or be discontinued. After the plan is completed, SWCD's will have implantation dollars to use for this purpose, should this be a priority.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to discontinue the existing sediment basin program when the One Watershed One Plan is complete, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The motion was carried.** As always, SWCD's or landowners may present funding requests to the district as they align with our Strategic Plan.

Moran's Advertising: The district was approached to partner with Moran's Supper Club in Winger, MN for the promotion of the Watershed. They have offered two 36" x 40" custom made solid Oak daily special signs. The signs will be mounted on the wall where everyone can see. A space reserved on the sign for us to showcase our name and logo, in full color on an 8"x 5" full color ad, and the ads are exclusive. They don't allow competing businesses on the sign. The total investment for the two years is \$590.00. If we pay in advance, we get a \$25 discount bringing our total for two years to \$565.00 or we can make up to 4 payments.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to deny in the advertising for \$565 for a two-year commitment **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The motion was carried.**

8. OTHER BUSINESS & PARTNERING INFORMATION

Manager Andringa discussed concerns that he has with the approach on maintenance for our projects as it relates to spring flooding vs summer rains. He felt that we should take spring flooding into consideration as it relates to damages, and not have the sole focus of the drainage systems on summer rains. While the focus of the drainage systems is to provide the opportunity for drainage during summer rains, Manager Andringa felt that we should also consider resiliency of the systems during severe flooding (such as spring runoff). These damages are still costs that must be incurred against the drainage systems, and we should provide some focus on ensuring damages are minimized.

Herrmann clarified that we try to take that approach within our drainage systems. It's important to distinguish between intended benefits and system resiliency. While our drainage systems are not

designed to provide benefits during spring runoff, we need to ensure that these events do not damage the system to a point that the intended drainage benefits provided by the system are not compromised. Manager Andringa commented that we need to ensure some level of redundancy in our systems to ensure benefits are provided during summer rains, and also damage during spring runoff doesn't become a major system expense to fix.

9. PERMITS:

The following permits were presented to the board:

Permit 2023-11 Sletten Township, Section 23, Sletten Township, Install Culvert (Modification)

Gene Haugen and Richard Kroenig were present to explain that it was an emergency for the road, and that this permit has already been completed. Swenby explained that this is a County Legal Ditch system, and they will need to work with the County. Approval for this permit is pending confirmation from the County attorney that it has been confirmed that proposed work is consistent, as nearly practicable, with the same hydraulic capacity of the system, capacity as originally construction and subsequently improved. Any proposed work that is not consistent is not approved within the permit.

If the Township is looking for sizing recommendations, the district is asking for a hydraulic analysis report so adequate sizing can be achieved. Once the ditch authority for this legal system provides the hydraulic analysis report, our office will provide a size. The watershed approval does not confirm or deny an increased culvert size, without a hydraulic capacity report.

Permit 2023-14 Solheim Farms, Section 20, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve pending Polk County approval for outletting into Co. Dich 45

Permit 2023-15 Solheim Farms, Section 20, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve pending Polk County approval for outletting into Co. Dich 45

Permit 2023-16 Solheim Farms, Section 20, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve with provisions for outletting into SHWRD legal system

Permit 2023-17 Eric Solheim, Section 27, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve pending official purchase of land.

Permit 2023-18 Eric Solheim, Section 27, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve Option 2 – Not assessed into Ditch 80.

Permit 2023-19 Solheim Farms, Section 28, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve with provisions for outletting into SHWRD legal system.

Permit 2023-20 Elliott Solheim, Section 32, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve pending county approval.

Permit 2023-21 Elliott Solheim, Section 32, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approve with provisions for outletting into SHWRD legal system

Permit 2023-22 Eric Solheim, Section 34, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Recommend Approval

Permit 2023-23 Elliott Solheim, Section 34, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Recommend Approval

Permit 2023-24 Julie Hagen, Section 34, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Recommend Approval

Permit 2023- 25 Millicent Balstad, Section 21, Rosebud Township, Clean existing Ditch

*Approve recommending with a condition that the cleanout cannot change the direction of flow from historic drainage patterns. Based on LiDAR, it appears that approximately the north ½ of the road ditch goes north, and the remainder flows to a culvert crossing in the SW ¼ of section 21.

Permit 2023- 26 Karl Balstad, Section 15, Sletten Township, Install Culvert

- Recommend approval pending culvert size matches or larger than upstream crossing at Skadsem driveway. 18” as a minimum is recommended to minimize plugging potential. It’s a small drainage area, so low risk.
- Require a culvert in the east crossing, as it appears from LiDAR that half of the cemetery drains to the west. Unless it can be demonstrated that no water will pond in the cemetery.
- Conditional approval on County Highway Dept approval (approaches would be off Polk Co 1).

Permit 2023- 27 Charles N Hawkins Trust, Section 20, Russia Township, Install Tile

*Approval pending County approval (outlets into Polk Co Ditch 45).

Permit 2023- 28 Charles N Hawkins Trust, Section 32, Russia Township, Install Tile

Table this permit. Since it could have implications on County Ditch systems, it should be verified as acceptable by the ditch authority. A review of the LiDAR data suggests that a portion of Section 32 flows south into Polk County Ditch 46 and North into Ditch 90. It is possible to alter the design of the proposed drainage system to better match surface drainage pattern. It is recommended to table until a new design is submitted or confirmation from the County is presented.

Permit 2023-29 Polk County Highway Department, Section 25, Vineland Township, Bridge Installation

*Table until more information is obtained

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa approve the above listed permits, and table Permits # 2023-28 and # 2023-29, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, June 1, 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 10:58 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary