



**TITLE:** Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** April 2, 2026

### 1. ATTENDANCE:

Vice Chairman Don Andringa called the April 2, 2026, meeting to order at 8 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson and Shawn Brekke. Managers absent included Stuart Christian. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerck – Administrative Assistant. Others attendance included Rob Sip – Red River Watershed Management Board and Ted Priester - Red River Basin Commission. Those attending via remote technology included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering, Molly Jensen – Park Street Public, Ian Marsh – Park Street Public, and Jennifer Johnson – Big Horn Public Affairs.

### 2. RED RIVER BASIN COMMISSION PRESENTATION:

Ted Priester provided information to the managers regarding the Natural Resources Framework Plan (NRFP) which was developed as a tool that contributes to developing a unified voice for the basin and a summary of RRBC base funding milestones. The RRBC has asked for partnership support for \$5,000 as it has in the past since the Sand Hill River Watershed District departed its membership from the Red River Watershed Management Board. The Red River Basin Commission reflects the multi-jurisdictional nature of the basin. It is made up of a board of 41 members, each representing the principal federal and state/provincial governments, as well as Tribes, First Nations, local elected officials (towns, cities, counties, rural municipalities), and subdivisions of governments representing soil and water management districts or agencies. Landowners and citizens of the basin are also represented by their constituents and environmental advocates. The Commission's broad membership represents the wide range of interests in the basin.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to provide funding support in the amount of \$5,000 to the RRBC. **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

### 3. AGENDA APPROVAL:

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

### 3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve the minutes from the March 5, 2026 meeting, correcting one typographical date error, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**4. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke approving the March 2026 Treasurer Report, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

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

<b>April J. Swenby</b>	506.05
<b>City of Fertile</b>	1,000.00
<b>EcoLab</b>	60.68
<b>First Community Credit Union</b>	3,804.85
<b>Garden Valley Telephone Company</b>	148.95
<b>H2Over Viewers</b>	32,201.73
<b>Houston Engineering</b>	9,024.50
<b>Houston Engineering</b>	7,026.00
<b>Lakes Community Cooperative</b>	375.64
<b>Mill Street Catering</b>	159.67
<b>Otter Tail Power Company</b>	182.11
<b>Polk County Fair (Booth Rental)</b>	250.00
<b>Wild Rice Electric</b>	120.45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>54,860.63</u></b>

One additional bill was presented from the City of Fertile (February's Billing) for \$80.40.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the bills to be paid, including the additional bill Swenby presented. **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

The total amount of bills to be paid was \$54,941.03

Last month the board approved to move forward with a contract for Revver Docs. Initial contract was increased from \$1500 per year to \$2700 per year. After negotiations, it was agreed upon for a 3-year contract for \$2200 per year. This is reflected in the First Community Credit Union itemized listing of charges.

Swenby summarized how the district has maximized Watershed Based implementation funds for the Sand Hill River Restoration Project Team efforts and summarized potential local share costs. Swenby has put in a request for use of any leftover funds from other LGU's in the state of Minnesota for this grant period. The steering team is waiting on BWSR to complete their reconciliation to release the 10% contingency which may be allocated to the district.

Swenby explained a future action item for funding the 25% cost share for the erosion control repair in Liberty Township along the Sand Hill Ditch if WBIF funds are unavailable.

## 5. RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD PRESENTATION:

Rob Sip, Executive Director of the RRWMB along with Molly Jansen and Ian Marsh – Park Street Public, and Jennifer Johnson – Big Horn Public Affairs presented lobbying efforts performed by the RRWMB to the managers.

Sip also presented the RRWMB drainage report and a report from August of 2025 of the RRWMB involvement in agricultural land protection in the Red River Basin. Sip briefly discussed membership benefits and roles that the RRWMB serves for member districts.

## 6. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

**Web-site Accessibility:** E-mails were sent to representatives in Fischbach's office to highlight challenges for small government units in rural areas. Swenby has asked the RRWMB, the SWCD association, Senator Johnson's office, Representative Gandner's office and Mn Watershed's to do the same.

**FEMA 2022 Damages Update:** FEMA is on furlough. Staff has not been able to get a response about the next steps.

**Audit:** The 2025 audit is not complete yet. The district was under collateralized in December of 2025 due to automatic deposits made and vendor checks not being cashed. Solutions for tax deposits made in December were discussed.

**Project Teams:** Both teams project held the kick off March 24. Draft minutes were provided to the managers for each team. Both teams tentatively plan to meet again the end of April. A summary of both project teams was provided by Swenby and Herrmann.

Managers discussed the benefits for downstream landowner input for the SH Off Channel Storage Project Team. A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to invite Joel Stola or Mark Stola and Steve Hamre to serve on SH Off Channel Storage Project Team as a downstream landowner, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**FDRWG Conference:** Swenby and Manager Peterson attended. Paul Engelstad also presented as a landowner in support of storage in the valley. Paul and Swenby did a radio interview together on watershed and landowner collaboration in the watershed.

**Clean Water Council:** Swenby was appointed by Governor Walz to serve on the Clean Water Council. Swenby provided the press release that was sent to the local newspaper.

**Project # 27:** The district was required to complete a 2026 Local Government Capital Request form from MMB. There were some legal questions about statute that needed to be answered, and John Kolb assisted (thus the resolution in the action items). There were also technical questions that Herrmann assisted with. Upon approval of the resolution today, the required MMB form will be submitted to the state.

**Ottertail Rebate:** Swenby has been working with Ottertail for rebate submittal. She met with them for a building inventory on March 26, 2026. Swenby provided the finalized rebate for lighting to the managers. She reported that the water heater wasn't big enough to qualify. May be eligible for a \$10 each month for off peak;

however, the cost to have this wired may not be worth it. The district does not have a heat pump and was not eligible for rebates for heating.

**Surplus Auction:** Swenby provided a report for Oistad Auction for the surplus items sold by the Sand Hill Watershed.

**March Activities:** Swenby reported on conferences and meetings throughout the month of March.

## 7. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

**Project Team:** Herrmann reported on two project teams and the work HEI performed and the outcomes of the meeting. He highlighted the direction he was given by the project team for proceeding forward. His focus was directed to a channel survey near the jurisdiction of the Bear Park Dam and more defined purpose and need statements for both teams. Another meeting is planned for the end of April.

## 8. ACTION ITEMS.

**Polk County Fair Support:** The Polk County Fair has asked for sponsorship of the Reptile Amphibian Zoo in exchange for signage, a listing on the annual premium list, recognition on the PC Fair website, social media, newspapers, radio advertising. The district's booth will be located near the Reptile Amphibian Zoo to draw more traffic to the district's booth, if the board purchases a second booth space.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to contribute \$500 towards the Reptile Amphibian Zoo sponsorship for the 2026 Polk County Fair. **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**Project # 27 Resolution of Support for Appropriation:** A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke and **Seconded** by Manager Peterson to adopt the following resolution:

### Findings:

1. In approximately 1999, the Union-Lake Sarah Improvement District and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) funded a project to provide a mechanical outlet to otherwise landlocked Union Lake and Lake Sarah (the "Project")..
2. The overall purpose of the Project is to protect against and mitigate flood damage from high water conditions on Union Lake and Lake Sarah. Without the Project, the lakes have experienced substantial flood damage.
3. From approximately 1999 to 2012, the Union-Lake Sarah Improvement District charged landowners within the Project area for the costs of construction, operation and maintenance of the Project.
4. On September 4, 2012, the Sand Hill River Watershed District ("District") accepted the transfer of the Union Lake Outlet Pump Station from the Union/Lake Sarah Improvement District, pursuant to a Petition filed pursuant to Minn. Stat.§103D.705.
5. Since 2012, the District has operated and maintained the Project and assessed benefitted landowners for the costs of operation and maintenance.
6. The District operates the Project under a permit from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

7. As of July 23, 2024, the DNR has suspended the Project permit because zebra mussels, an aquatic invasive species (AIS), was discovered in Union Lake and Lake Sarah.
8. State statutes and administrative rules prohibit the transfer of AIS between waterbodies or watercourses.
9. In order to operate the project in a manner compliant with law, discharges from the project must be filtered or treated to remove the AIS prior to discharge to the receiving waterbody or watercourse.
10. The modifications to the Project needed to remove the AIS are prohibitive without external funding.
11. The Board finds that the Project is critical public infrastructure that protects homes, septic systems, shoreland stability, downstream waters, and the long-term water quality of Union Lake and Lake Sarah.

Based on the foregoing Findings and the entire record of proceedings before the Board, the Board, acting as the authority for the Union Lake Outlet Pump Station Project, hereby adopts the following:

**Order**

a. The Board supports a request for State appropriation in the amount of \$1,500,000 for flood hazard mitigation from bond proceeds to the commissioner of natural resources for a grant to the Sand Hill River Watershed District for replacement of capital equipment used to pump water between two lakes in the Sand Hill River Watershed District.

After discussion, the Board President called the question. The question was on the adoption of the foregoing findings and order and there were 4 yeas, 0 nays as follows:

	Yea	Nay	Absent	Abstain
CHRISTIAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANDRINGA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BREKKE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BARTZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PETERSON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Upon vote, the Vice-Chairman Andringa declared the motion passed and the findings and order adopted.

**Clean Water Council Appointment:** Swenby presented the reimbursement/travel policy for serving on the CWC. Swenby explained past processes for per diem received by staff for serving on other boards that directly benefit impact the watershed district. The board can choose to receive the per diem/travel expenses on Swenby's behalf or elect the per diem/travel to be directed to Swenby. Travel days, when traveling for monthly meetings will be Sunday's. Swenby does track her time, and some weeks she will have more than 40 hours per week depending on the flexibility of her schedule. Swenby expects the total per diem per year to be about \$3,000; however this is contingent upon the needs for travel days and how many meetings she attends in person. Travel expenses are receipt based and reimbursed for exact amounts.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to authorize Swenby to serve on the CWC as a representative of the Sand Hill River Watershed district and other MN Watersheds, directing any allocated per diems and travel expenses be remitted to her and re-evaluate by Personal Committee at the end of the year, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

**Bear Park Survey:** The project team has asked for a channel survey. The budget between now and July is \$10,000 for this project team – half is funded locally and the other half is funded by the FDRWG. Swenby has proposed using the Data and Acquisition fund to support the survey needed for this effort.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to authorize Swenby authorize a channel survey and utilize the Data and Acquisition fund to allocate costs towards this effort, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

**District office re-key:** A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to authorize to rekey the east entrance of the district building, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.** Kent Schmitz will order and install the locks with an effort to have a uniform key for all entrances if possible.

## 9. MANAGER REPORTS

There were no manager reports. Manager Peterson gave a report on FDRWG conference he attended.

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS/PARTNERING AGENCY INFO.

The managers received information from the Red River Watershed Management Board, Drainage Work Group, and the International Water Institute.

## 11. PERMITS:

Three permits were presented to the board:

**Permit 26-001** – Polk County, Sections 28, 29, 32 and 33 – Winger Twp. Culver Installations

**Permit 26-002** – Paul Engelstad, Section 5 – Liberty Township, Install Tile

Recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Ensure that all tile stays on the property of the applicant. A driveway and building site are owned by a different landowner in the east ½ of Section 5, Liberty Township.
2. Standard tiling conditions that we've attached to tile drainage (not outletting into ditch systems).

**Permit 26-003-** Sletten Township, Section 20 – Sletten Township, Rip rap or culver modification

The application suggests several options/alternatives. The permit application does not pinpoint exactly what actions will be taken, but highlights a range of options that could be taken to solve the problem and they are as follows:

- Riprap Protection: Herrmann has no issue from a regulatory standpoint from the SHRWD's perspective if the Township wanted to install riprap to protect the road side slope.
- Culvert Installation: The district would need to verify the culvert is adequately sized. If the district were to provide that as a service through the permit process, it'd be a little more complex than the district's standard culvert sizing table. Given it's the Sand Hill River, the applicant would be subject to a MN

Public Waters permit and will require a more intensive hydraulic analysis. This can be performed at the Administrator's discretion as per district policy, should the township elect to move in this direction.

- Channel Re-routing/Dredging: This best fit in the SHRWD permit application process as Surface Drainage, and at this time with the information provided, Herrmann did not foresee drainage obstacles. However, the USACE and MN DNR may have a high threshold for a permit in this type of work.

Any of this work would likely require MN DNR public waters work permit and a USACE federal permit because this is on the Sand Hill River. Generally, the requirements to meet those two permits is much higher than what's typical for the SHRWD.

Swenby asked for board direction if the board would like to provide technical assistance to the township. This is a unique situation, and Swenby reminded the managers that if technical assistance is provided to err on the side of "what is done for one is done for all". In the past, townships and landowners retain their own technical engineers for design and guidance and the district offers culvert sizing and in rare instances hydraulic analysis for permitting needs. If the district board would like to continue with their existing practices Swenby suggests that the applicant to come back after they've sorted out all requirements from other regulatory agencies. She was happy to work with them to let them to provide resources for each alternative.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke approving permit 26-001, 26-002 (with the recommended contingencies), and deny permit 26-003 and invite a reapplication with defined actions that are intended to be implemented, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried**

## 12. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held May 7, 2026, 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 11:58 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

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Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

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Shawn Brekke, Secretary