



TITLE: Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes

DATE: August 6, 2026

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the August 6, 2026, meeting to order at 8 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Clayton Bartz, Todd Peterson, Don Andringa and Shawn Brekke. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance via remote technology included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering (HEI), Bethany Bethke – MN DNR and Nick Kludt – MN DNR. Others in attendance included Rachel Miller – Mn DOT.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL:

Manager Brekke suggested moving the action items ahead of the Administrator report. A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda, rearranging the order of items, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Peterson to approve the minutes from the July 2, 2026, meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa approving the July 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.

April J. Swenby	116.46
Brandner Printing	455.00
EcoLab	60.88
Fertile Hardware Hank	23.24
First Community Credit Union	1,298.06
Garden Valley Telephone Company	182.43
H2Over Viewers	23,464.32
Houston Engineering	37,269.25
John Winters	51,148.00
Lakes Community Cooperative	121.65
Otter Tail Power Company	267.34
Rinke-Noonan	544.50
TRF Lock and Key	433.75
Wild Rice Electric	1.90
TOTAL	<u>115,386.78</u>

Additional bills presented included the City of Fertile water billing for \$62.56, April Swenby for \$161.55 (TV stand reimbursement), and TRF Lock and Key \$208.75.

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

5. PERMITS:

26-009: MnDOT, Section 30 – City of Climax, Bridge replacement

Rachel Miller – MN DOT was present to explain the proposal identified in the permit and was available for questions. Herrmann did not recommend changes and recommends approval.

26-010: Polk County Highway Dept., Section 11 – Liberty Twp., Replace existing culvert

Staff is waiting on a response from Polk County to confirm culvert sizes

26-011: Polk County Highway Dept., Section 20 – Liberty Twp., Replace existing culvert

Herrmann did not recommend changes and recommends approval.

26-012: Bejou Township, Section 3 – Bejou Township, Replace culvert

The township has asked for additional assistance for sizing and height recommendations and it was determined that this permit requires a site visit

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve permits 9 and 11, and to approve 10 and 12 pending engineers' final recommendation, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

6. ACTION ITEMS.

Promotional Materials: Swenby stated that this year the fair booth used all the promotional materials on hand. She would like an annual budget to create meeting efficiencies for future purchase. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to authorizing up to \$500 annually for promotional materials for the Polk County Fair and other instances and a one time purchase of four tablecloths with the district logo, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

Neighorly Property Disruptions/repair: Swenby provided photos and a timeline of the district's office building project to help the board better understand any disruptions or usage of the neighbor's property during the building addition of the district office. The Other Place provided a copy of a bill for gravel/grading, and stated they did not have any photos. The photos Swenby provided came from the architect, contractor, and Swenby's phone. A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to compensate The Other Place \$1,500.00 plus the gravel/grading bills, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

Budget hearing and preliminary budget: Swenby and Manager Bartz presented the preliminary administrative budget and the three petitions under MSA statute 103D.905. A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve preliminary budget, the three petitions using MSA Statue 103D.905 petitioned by Polk County and schedule the budget hearing for September 3, 2026, at 8:30 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Disposal of Asset: Swenby reminded the managers that there are three categories of government items: SURPLUS PROPERTY: Damaged, obsolete or unnecessary personal property including, but not limited to, vehicles, equipment, furnishings, movable fixtures, tools, wires and cabling and clothing. OBSOLETE: Supplies, materials or equipment no longer in use or no longer useful, but possessing some value. OBSOLETE WITH ZERO VALUE: Supplies, materials or equipment that are obsolete but which, due to its condition or state of repair, has a zero value.

Discussion was held regarding the district sign from the east side of the building, noting to be in disrepair. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke classifying the district sign as obsolete with zero value, directing staff to dispose of the sign, **Seconded** by Manager Peterson. **The Motion was carried.**

West Office Door: Due to contractor health restraints with the contractor who built the addition, Swenby has hired TRF Doors for a more timely repair the west door latch and the door was repaired this week.

Swenby would also like to hire “the Painter Lady” who painted the window trim to come back and paint the west door so another season is not missed if the contractor is unable to make it back this way. While she is here she’d like her to touch up the windows where the pressure washer chipped a few small areas.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to hire “The Painter Lady” from Ada to paint the district door and touch up the trim, and to retroactively hire TRF Doors to adjust the door for latching as recommended by Swenby, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

The managers suggested a letter of appreciation to the contractor who built the addition.

7. MN DNR PILOT DISCUSSIONS (9:30 AM):

Nick Kludt, Mn DNR presented a PILOT concept surrounding bank restorations utilizing ideas such as vegetation, erosion-control blankets, biologs, wattles, revetments, and mats or combinations thereof, to effectively protect and rebuild banks. These approaches utilize all natural materials that do not artificially confine the channel, they are relatively inexpensive, and can be applied to all stream varieties (forested, prairie, steep, gentle, rocky, sandy). Kludt inquired with the board if there was interest in pursuing a PILOT for funding for specific portions of the SH Ditch. Kludt affirmed that these conceptual ideas were based on discussions with staff for solutions to reduce erosion east of Highway 9. The board was in consensus that they would be interested in learning more.

8. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

IRS Mileage Rate: The IRS mileage rate increased to \$.76 per mile for July. Manager time sheets for July were adjusted. Last month Managers were only paid \$.0725 for your mileage.

One Watershed One Plan: Nicole Berndt, formerly the Manager at the West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has taken a position with the Board of Soil and Waters Resources (BWSR). Swenby is working with interim SWCD staff for reimbursement for dollars spent towards the Liberty Erosion modification and some SH River Ecosystem Restoration dollars spent. Swenby is expecting the remaining reimbursement to be between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

Rules and Regulations: A year or more ago, the district was reviewing and considering modifications to the rules and regulations. This was placed on hold for cost efficiency knowing that BWSR would be updating the Buffer Law requirements and through that process, district rules and regulations would need to be modified. That process is complete and Counties and Watershed Districts must revise their local controls using the 2026 model ordinance or rule templates by July 31, 2027. Throughout fall, Herrmann and Swenby will resurrect this and to make sure all the comments from managers from 2021 are incorporated (or provide the attorney response to the suggestions). Swenby provided the modifications made when the managers from 2021 left off for review. Swenby encouraged managers to look over the suggestions in the next couple of months and along with attorney guidance she provided. As a reminder, most modifications were made in the section relating to tiling. Swenby stated she will need to work with John Kolb to implement BWSR’s amendments. As a reminder, Swenby stated that changing district rules is a legal process and will require public notices and comment periods.

MPCA Climate Action Grant: The report was completed and was provided to the managers. The local share for the district was \$3,971.75 and \$50,000 will be reimbursed to the district and has been applied for. For the district's local share of \$3,971.75, Swenby submitted a request for 50% from the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (FDRWG). The remaining local cost share will be shared 50/50 by the project team/petitioned levy of "Studies and Agency Support".

Project # 27: A draft revised operations and maintenance plan was provided. HEI has estimated \$2-3k in the spring for temperature/sampling for AIS, and the same price again in the fall if fall pumping is warranted. Swenby and Herrmann met with MnDNR about a revised permit on August 4. The Mn DNR has now verbally expressed opposition to their initial suggestions of temperature-controlled pumping stating it is likely that regardless a new screen would be required to avoid adult muscles nestled in the pipe being transported downstream or the district could opt to remove the pipe during water temperatures exceeding 48 degrees. Swenby has contacted legislators to inform them of the new opposition. Swenby also contacted Matt Bauman regarding Flood Hazzard Mitigation dollars and reminded him of the urgency for funding and informed him of the Mn DNR's position to temperature controlled pumping as a solution, and asked him to make the change to the application. Bauman stated that he expects selections to be made for allocations by the end of the month and affirmed that the Mn DNR's alternative solution was one of the reasons the district's initial application was not ranked higher.

FEMA 2022 Damages Update: Swenby reported that she requested assistance from the district's HSEM state representative. FEMA is stating that the mitigation plan submitted is classified as an "improvement" under their guidelines. Due to the time restraints Swenby has asked the representative to mediate discussions between the district and FEMA and to provide guidance. Swenby was told this is quite common with FEMA and state advocacy is the next step. Our state rep has been sent the information he needs to help us work through the next steps. Swenby and Herrmann will meet with him again next week.

Administrator Internal Budget: Last fall the board took action to authorize Manager Bartz and Swenby to work through an internal policy or guidance document for Administrative expenses to provide administrative efficiency and pre-authorized approved for expenses outside of non-regular Administrative costs. When Manager Bartz and Swenby met for the budget, she provided two different watershed e-mails that highlighted their internal practices for comparisons, and presented correspondence from the attorney. Based on other watersheds and correspondence from the district's legal counsel, Swenby provided a very early draft to the board that Swenby and Manager Bartz will be working through.

Upcoming Events: Swenby stated that August is a busy month for conferences, training, and tours. She highlighted the following for managers to attend

- Mn Watersheds Summer Tour – August 24 – August 26. Manager Peterson will attend.
- MADI Conference – August 19-20 (St. Cloud)

Miscellaneous Updates: Swenby provided information from H2Over Viewers with an update on the Redetermination of Benefits and a written status update on ditch maintenance for 2026.

9. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

Project # 5 Outlet Stabilization: Survey work has started and was reflected in the bills to be paid. Herrmann has added upstream survey data to better understand how water is delivered. This data will also compliment data needed to evaluate maintenance requests on the system.

Redetermination of Benefits: Herrmann completed a review of the district drainage systems and the external boundary. Results have been provided and HEI staff will be working internally with H2Over Viewers. HEI is made a site visit to evaluate culverts along Project # 11 based on permits that received and known culverts in the area. H2Over would like this information to use as feedback for the draft viewers report.

Herrmann reminded the board of Atty Kolb's guidance last month and reported that his team is working through the watershed boundaries and is hoping to be at a position in September to make recommendations to the board.

Project Teams:

Bear Park: Houston Engineering drafted an updated plan-of-work approach for the Bear Park project team, including channel survey work, downstream impact review, alternative development, project team review, and preferred alternative selection. This plan allows for a schedule to allow for grant funds to be applied for by November 2026. The Board discussed schedule, costs, grant funding opportunities, Flood Damage Reduction Work Group funds, and possible DNR funding support. . A cost estimate of \$95,000 was provided to get to a position where a grant could be applied for in November of 2026. . **A Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to authorize the implementation highlighted in Herrmann's plan of work document, not to exceed \$95,000.00. **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby stated that a portion of these costs are eligible for FDRWG reimbursement. The amount of reimbursement for the next fiscal year has not been approved by the FDRWG.

SH River Storage Solutions: HEI staff met with the landowner onsite to begin the a complete inventory of the site.

Project Inspections: Herrmann is working on developing a repair plan for Project # 27. He is working with the contractor to complete 2025 repairs/cleanings on legal systems.

10. MANAGER REPORTS

There were no manager reports.

11. OTHER BUSINESS/PARTNERING AGENCY INFO.

The managers received information/updates from Mn Watershed's, Drainage Work Group, the Clean Water Council and the Mn Association of Drainage Inspectors.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held on September 3, 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 10:49 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerk, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary