



1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the January 7, 2020 meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers present were Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad, JJ Hamre, and Dan Vesledahl. One staff member was present April Swenby – Administrator. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann – Houston Engineering.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

3. OATH OF OFFICE:

Craig Engelstad was sworn in and took the Oath of Office as a Manager of the Sand Hill River Watershed District. A Motion was made by Manager Vesledahl to accept Manager Engelstad's Oath of office, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

4. ANNUAL REORGANIZATION:

Annual reorganization of the Board was conducted. Chairman Christian turned the meeting over to Manager Vesledahl who asked for nominations for **Chairman of the Board**. Manager Bartz nominated Manager Christian for Chair. Nominations were called for three times by Manager Vesledahl. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Stuart Christian for Chairman by Manager Engelstad **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**. Manager Vesledahl returned the chair to Chairman Christian.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Vice Chairman** of the Board. Manager Bartz nominated Manager Vesledahl for Vice Chairman. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Vesledahl for Vice Chairman by Manager Engelstad, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Secretary of the Board**. Manager Vesledahl nominated Manager Hamre for Secretary. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Manager Hamre for Secretary by Manager Engelstad, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

Chairman Christian asked for nominations for **Treasurer** of the Board. Manager Vesledahl nominated Manager Bartz for Treasurer. Nominations were called for three times by Chairman Christian. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Manager Bartz for Treasurer by Manager Engelstad **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

Manager Vesledahl made a **Motion** for the following: That the Fertile Journal is designated as the official newspaper of the SHRWD. That the following financial institutions be designated as official depositories for SHRWD funds: Red River State Bank of Fertile and Bremer Bank, Detroit Lakes,

MN. That the District's consulting engineering firm is Houston Engineering, PO Box 5054, Fargo, ND. That the attorney for the District is David Hauff, Firm of Anderson and Bottrell, PO Box 10247, Fargo, ND. That mileage for District business is reimbursable at a per mile rate coinciding with the allowable IRS mileage rate. That manager per diem is set at \$40 per hour with a maximum daily total of \$125.00 as prescribed by State law. **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to authorize Stuart Christian, Clayton Bartz, and April Swenby as the current financial and representative signers, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad, **Carried**.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to April Swenby as an authorized signer to the Business Rewards Credit card with FCCU giving Bartz and Swenby the ability to use the assigned credit card on behalf of the district, **Seconded** by Manager Vesledahl, **Carried**. Credit card charges are always listed on the bills to be paid individually for the managers to review each month. Both meeting minutes and one signature are required for any future signature additions/removals to this credit card.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad authorizing the April Swenby and Clayton Bartz as authorized representatives regarding the Membership Savings account and credit card listing them on the entity authorization form, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

For informational purposes, Swenby reminded the managers of the following which are regulated by the credit card company:

- One signature is required to withdraw funds from the Reward Savings account at First Community Credit Union.
- One signature is also required to open/close any accounts with First Community Credit Union.
- When new employees or new Treasurers represent the Sand Hill Watershed District, proper documentation will need to be reflected for the credit card.

5. **MINUTES:**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2019 meeting as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Vesledahl, **Carried**.

6. **TREASURER'S/FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Swenby read the Treasurer's Report

Swenby reminded the managers that many of our accounts on the fund balance report that are shown require an accumulative total. Accounts that do not require an accumulative total, are considered complete, or are best managed with a new running total for a new fiscal year are the following:

- Steve Hamre Ring Dike
- Web-site, Permits DB & Mapping
- Beaver Bounty Program
- Technical Engineering/Legal
- Agency Support
- Monitoring

Beginning January 2020, the totals in these accounts have been moved to their "Parent" account so that the board can better track annual totals being spent in relation to budget and the new petitioned tax levies during the upcoming year.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to approve the Treasurer's Report for December,

Seconded by Manager Bartz, **Carried.**

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

Al and Laura's Foods	29.97
Anderson, Bottrell, Sanden & Thompson	577.50
April J. Swenby	537.66
City of Fertile	106.12
EcoLab	53.57
Erickson's Smokehouse	301.32
First Community Credit Union	374.17
Garden Valley Telephone Company	209.04
Houston Engineering	33,033.10
International Water Institute	1,313.86
Liberty Township	1,755.00
Marco	601.47
Nation Stamps	49.85
Otter Tail Power Company	394.13
Sam's Club	144.84
Sarah Wise	55.00
Stuhaug Sanitation	46.80
Todd's Landscaping	20.00
Wild Rice Electric	134.80
TOTAL	<u>39,738.20</u>

Additional Bills that were presented that were not listed on the bills to be paid report due to timing of when the report was created include:

Milt Yergens	6,600.00
Opdahl's Donuts	29.00
Polk County Tax Payer Service Center	20.00
TOTAL	<u>6,649.00</u>

Swenby noted that the following bills were paid in December after the board meeting and are reflected on the check register of the December Treasurer's Report. She noted reimbursement requests for the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council grant and the RRWMB levy reimbursements are date sensitive and must be written with a December 31, 2019 date for accurate record keeping. The checks were cut and held and will be mailed upon today's meeting approval.

Houston Engineering	1,478.28
Red River Watershed Management Board	621.17
TOTAL	<u>2,099.45</u>

A **Motion** was made by Manager Vesledahl to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$48,486.65, **Seconded** by Hamre, **Carried.**

7. ENGINEER'S REPORT:

City of Nielsville: Herrmann helped draft a letter to Bill Brekke regarding the technical side of the concerns he had with the Ring Dike for the City of Nielsville.

Project # 17: The quote from Braun for soil testing was \$13,000. Ultimately, the end result fix is likely flattening the side slopes. The soil testing would provide assurance that this is a fix, but it is costly. The estimated cost to flatten the slope 7:1 are \$40,000-\$50,000. A discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of the Geotech analysis. The current sluffing has not affected the hydraulic capacity of the ditch. There have not been any landowners who have reported or complained of the sluffing, although there have been reports from a prior board manager who states there is a landowner has concerns with sluffing, but no landowners have directly asked the watershed to repair. Herrmann will bring more information about scope of work included in the \$13,000 cost estimate.

Project # 32 – Ditch #80: Liquidated damages continue to be tracked at \$1,000 per day. Construction is on hold due to winter conditions. Herrmann reported that this fall, Polk County Ditch 80 (Mainline) was excavated and culverts were installed from the Project 17 outlet through approximately 1,000' west of Lateral 2. Lateral 1 was excavated and culverts were installed. Lateral 2 was excavated and culverts were installed from the Mainline through 390th St SW (north/south portion of the ditch). Much discussion was held regarding liquidated damages. There are additional contracted service costs (legal and technical) plus additional ROW costs for landowners who cannot seed in the spring. Davidson plans to attend the February meeting.

SH Ditch Riffles – Phase 2: The project was delayed due to unfavorable weather and flow conditions in 2019. The Public Waters Permit only allows for construction in later summer/fall/winter, and in 2019 it was abnormally wet. The contract expired January 7, 2020. Herrmann recommends extending the contract until November 1, 2020. This date has been approved by the MnDNR and the contractor. A **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to extend the contract date for Phase 2 of the Rock Riffles Fish Passage Project to November 1, 2020 as recommended, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried.**

Kittleson Creek Outlet: Flow and weather conditions have prevented construction to date. Herrmann is working with the contractor for a revised schedule. The contract is being administered through county as bridge funds apply.

SH Lake Outlet: Houston Engineering is working with the contractor schedules to develop a date for a preconstruction conference. The contractor is looking towards late January or early February.

Poissant Bridge: The survey work was completed. Houston Engineering is waiting on verification of the MNDNR funding before completing a conceptual design.

Carlson Coulee Grade Stabilization: Wright Construction has completed the installation of the grade control structures. The contingency will continue to be held (5%) until spring.

Kraulik Excavating has started timber cleanup along the channel.

Project Team: Herrmann would like to schedule a date for a committee meeting for the discussion. The NRCS Review Point 2 (Purpose and Need) and Review Point 3 (Affected Environment) have been submitted to NRCS for review and the district is awaiting their comments.

Kurass Lake: As directed by the board last month, Herrmann has reviewed data submitted by the Township in 1997, which did not include elevation information. A field survey may be required to establish the current outlet elevation relative to the ordinary high water mark. This will dictate the level that the lakes can be further drawn down without a public waters work permit.

Clean Water Fund Projects: As directed Houston Engineering will be working on data needed for the submittal of CWF grant applications for Polk County 44, Brady Kroenig Water Retention, and

Sections 28-33 of Liberty. There are also issues regarding major bank sluffing near the Nature Center, West of Fertile and at the Motteberg site that was visited last month.

8. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Administrator Calendar: Swenby highlighted her calendar for January.

MAWD: Swenby attended MAWD on December 6.

There was a valuable session that Herrmann and Swenby attended that discussed tools for stream bank erosion and tools that measure sediment load into the river systems. This will be favorable for the district for CWF grant applications should the district proceed forward with aid for the Motteberg site, the sites at the nature center and the sites west of Fertile that were discussed last month. Swenby will continue to work with Herrmann to develop ideas for moving forward with the dynamic side slopes along the Sand Hill River (these sites were displayed and discussed in December 2019). Herrmann stated that he could get a scope of work for implementing this sort of thing in the Sand Hill, along with a cost estimate. Grant funds may be available to help fund the effort. Herrman will check to see what funds were made available when the Buffalo-Red used this option.

MAWD Legislative Days: Rooms have been reserved for the MAWD Legislative Days March 18-19.

RRBC Conference – Nourished by Nature: Getting Back to our Roots will be held in Fargo on January 14 and continue through January 16. Manager Hamre would like to attend. Swenby will register Manager Hamre.

Drainage Conference: The 2nd Annual Drainage Conference will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott Moorhead, MN on January 27, 2020. Swenby will be attending.

Project # 12 Bond Surplus: Swenby has been working with Polk County to obtain the surplus of bond funds for Project # 12. On December 16 the County board approved issuing the surplus funds to the watershed for the maintenance of the project, now that the bond is paid off. The amount is \$48,089.20 and was reflected on the Treasurer's Report.

Beaver Trapping: Trappers have pulled out of all designated areas. Scouting will begin in the spring.

Insurance: Swenby has implemented the initial paperwork for MCIT to launch new insurance coverage beginning March 1, 2020.

MN Campaign Finance: Annual recertification must be filed after January 1, 2020 but not later than January 27, 2020. A public official who does not file a recertification by the deadline will be subject to the imposition of late filing fees and a potential civil penalty. Swenby has been working with Manager Hanson's wife to assist with his compliance.

District Christmas Party: The district Christmas party has been moved to January 11 at the Ralph Engelstad for a UND hockey game. A suite has been offered for use that evening. The suite will be open at 6 PM. The managers will meet at 5:15 at the Home of Economy parking lot in Grand Forks, ND and ride share to the Ralph as there is limited parking.

Building Project Discussions: The district was granted a County permit for in-drive parking.

City of Nielsville: A letter was sent to Bill Brekke to address his concerns and he has formally been asked for his support of this project. Upon his approval, an additional letter will be drafted from the City of Nielsville and Polk County asking the State of MN to consider Nielsville as a viable location for flood protection.

FDRWG: Last month the board reviewed a proposed addendum to the Mediation Agreement. There was question at the workgroup level regarding the level of input that the Sand Hill and the Buffalo Red have and if there is a seat at the table for our districts, however, both districts were invited to review the addendum. Swenby met with Buffalo Red and the letter that was drafted as a result of the meeting was provided to the managers. A **Motion** was made by Manager Vesledahl to send the letter as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**, Swenby will send the letter this week in response to the proposed addendum.

The managers reviewed with Manager Engelstad the history of the Sand Hill River Watershed District and the RRWMB and any effects of the withdrawal from the RRWMB. Lobbying efforts were discussed. Discussion was held regarding the Emerging Leaders Program, suggesting Swenby look into the program. The managers agreed that this would be a good program and of benefit for Swenby in her role as Administrator. Swenby will call Jody Horntvedt to get more information about nominations for 2021. Manager Engelstad reiterated the importance of a lobbyist and indicated he learned the legislative process and lobbying effects from when he and his wife were going through the Emerging Leaders Program.

DWG: Swenby attended the DWG meeting on December 12 via teleconferencing. Al Keen came out of retirement to work on a document that was started but not finished before his departure. When the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual was updated there wasn't sufficient funding to update the UMPDL. Al Kean is back with BWSR part-time working on completing an update of the UMDPL. DWG members were asked to review and provide comments to the draft document by early January. Dan Wilkens has offered to review the document as well. The managers were asked to provide their comments to Swenby by January 13.

Bear Park: As suggested at the December board meeting, Swenby notified Garden Township of the dam location and asked them to review options for removal on behalf of the landowners.

Vesledahl Wetland Mitigation: This fall, after MnDOT denied the district's request for easements, Swenby requested another meeting with MnDOT where she can be present, and possibly Mark Johnson to continue to discuss the possibility of easements in the districts name. Swenby has asked for legislative assistance for obtaining drainage easements to provide an opportunity for drainage for landowners, and has not heard a response. Rod Gunderson called on 12/3/19 for a status update on the position of the district. He was reminded that Swenby has requested another meeting with MnDOT to discuss proper easements in the area. Dave Weirens reached out to the district in later December for a status of the MOU that was discussed in April 2019. Weirens was sent the excerpt from our minutes which states he was going to get the expenses of the project to the district along with a Draft O & M.

Snow Piles: The parking lot is inundated with snow again. As of Friday last week, there was one parking spot left. The City of Fertile removed the snow pile at the district's request.

E-File Cabinet Subscription: The E-file cabinet subscription is due, and it is \$1,465. This is our last year at that contract price and prices will need to be renegotiated next year. A **Motion** was made by Manager Vesledahl to continue with the annual subscription for E-file cabinet for \$1,465, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**.

Logo Clothing: Last year Staff and Managers were granted two articles of clothing. Staff is asking for an additional budget for clothing with the district logo. For conference days, two articles is not enough. Swenby purchased one for summer and one for winter. Other districts and companies provide an annual budget for logo clothing to represent their entity. A **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to authorize an annual staff clothing with the district logo of two articles, along with a one time purchase of two articles for Craig Engelstad, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

Training Opportunities: Additional training opportunities were discussed:

- The *MN Viewers Association* is holding a seminar on January 9, 2020 from 10 AM to 1 PM in Morton, MN with presenter Mark Origer from ISG on the drainage system processes for new ditches improvements and repairs.
- There is a two day class called “How to Communicate with Tact and Professionalism. This class also has a writing session. It is in Fargo on March 16 -17. The cost is \$299. A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to authorize Swenby to attend the “How to Communicate with Tact and Professionalism” session in Fargo, **Seconded** by Manager Vesledahl, **Carried**.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Partnering agency reports were provided to the managers from agencies including the Drainage Workgroup, Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, and the RRWMB.

10. PERMITS:

No permits were brought before the board.

11. EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS:

Employee evaluations were continued from a tabled discussion in December 2019.

The current benefit packages were discussed. Comparisons were made with the other watersheds within the Red River Watershed. The highest benefit package is \$15,000 per year but most are \$12,000 per year (in 2019). The district’s current health insurance premiums are increasing by about \$100 per month and will be \$1,392.46 (the district pays \$1,000 and the employee pays the balance). Additionally, employee out of pocket maximums will increase by \$2,000 per year and co-pays will increase by an additional \$50 per office visit.

The Sand Hill currently has the lowest paid Administrator. The highest paid Administrator is at \$92,327. In 2018, Sand Hill employee base salary wages were a total of \$95,053.19 for two staff persons. With that comparison, Swenby noted that the district has saved just over \$35,000 annually by merging the two positions. A complete time sheet of how Administrator hours are spent in 2019 was provided in December, including hours spent over 40 hours per week (*estimated to be about 45 unpaid hours for 2019*). In addition to a \$35,000 cost savings for staffing, Swenby reminded the managers that she initiated and implemented the increase of income by about \$1,600 per month (varied) due to the money market account.

At the time of hiring Swenby asked for \$70,000 salary and a part time office assistant and was denied both to give the board time to evaluate the direction of the district and capabilities of the staff. Swenby asked the board to re-evaluate her initial request at the time of hiring, cost of living increases, and any merit increases. The board was also asked to evaluate the work-load/responsibility of Swenby in comparison to the current wages. Swenby felt that the work load, her education, 18 years of working for the district in an Administrative role and the responsibility that the job demands justified her request and that moving forward with the requested increase in salary would still leave them as the lowest paid Administrator of all 9 watersheds in the Red River Basin. Swenby asked the managers to discuss if she could be replaced for the salary she is asking for, suggesting that someone with 18 years of watershed experience and her qualifications would cost the district more than what she is asking. Swenby asked for a complete evaluation, including suggestions for improvement.

Swenby was asked to leave during manager discussions. Herrmann and Swenby left the meeting.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Vesledahl to increase Swenby’s salary by \$4,000 per year each year (2020, 2021, and 2022) using a step process for the base salary increase, retroactive January 1, 2020, **Seconded** by Manager Hamre, **Carried**. The benefits of the district were not adjusted.

Feedback from the managers suggested that Swenby continue to move forward with networking and outreach. Swenby agreed with that goal and will continue to prioritize meetings and outreach, balancing the office duties with being the single employee of the district. She will continue to network and continue with the relationships that have been built but must prioritize due to Administrative duties in the office.

Swenby asked the remaining board members to consider hiring an office assistant. An assistant would help spread the work load and responsibility, hopefully alleviating some of the unpaid work hours that Swenby recorded in 2019. She suggested starting with 8-10 hours a week with possibly no hours in the middle of the month, depending on the work load and Swenby's schedule of events outside of the office. Strem, who has been hired through the service-learning program, has worked out well, but will be done with that program mid – January. Strem has offered to come after school as needed to keep up with the document management portion and can until Golf starts in March. Swenby agreed that this will still be helpful because Strem was only able to come for 35 minutes a day through the program and it was difficult for her to start something and see it to fruition with such limited time. An additional employee would benefit the district's security as well; offering one more person who could keep the day to day functions moving in the event of an emergency.

Swenby suggested that the Assistant could be responsible for all document management, accounts payable, minutes, and basic secretarial duties.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 8 AM. As there was no further business to come before the board, a **Motion** was made by Manager Hamre to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 PM, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz, **Carried**.

April Swenby, Administrator

JJ Hamre, Secretary