



TITLE: DRAFT REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: MARCH 2, 2023

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the March 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 Don Andringa. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerck – Administrative Assistant.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the agenda, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2023, and the special meeting held on February 21, 2023, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

The Treasurer’s Report for February was presented. A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and dispense the reading of the Treasurer’s Report for February, **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:

Anders Valley Publishing	315.00
April J. Swenby	668.00
Association of MN Counties	585.00
City of Fertile	57.59
EcoLab	53.57
First Community Credit Union	1,736.41
Garden Valley Telephone Company	468.49
Houston Engineering	15,202.37
Otter Tail Power Company	547.42
Sarah Wise	48.00
The 13 Towns	131.33
Todd's Landscaping	70.00
West Polk Soil & Water Conservation District	1,900.00
Wild Rice Electric	137.23
YHR Partners	1,067.50
TOTAL	<u>22,987.91</u>

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and pay the bills with a total of \$22,987.91 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

One Watershed One Plan: The Steering Committee met on February 14. The group focused their discussion on measurable goals, and allocations between Projects and Practices, and Capital Improvements. All committees meet in March (Advisory and Policy Committee is scheduled for March 14 and the Steering Committee is scheduled for March 15).

February Conferences: Swenby attended the Drainage Conference, the MN Watersheds Legislative Breakfast and the MAWA meetings. Swenby reported that it was a busy month of education and networking.

Drainage Work Group: Swenby attended the DWG meeting on February 10. There is contention between watershed stakeholders and the MnDNR's recent proposal for a drainage portal. The MnDNR had initially agreed to continue to work with the DWG to reach consensus, but recently, a bill was submitted for this session to implement a drainage portal, without consensus from the DWG.

FEMA Funding: Swenby is still working on preparing for an appeal and is still working with the Corp and FEMA on packaging up the origination documents that she has found, even though the signed documents cannot be located that indicate the transfer of the SH Ditch to the Watershed District's jurisdiction. Swenby has gone through all documents at the Polk County Courthouse and came up empty for recorded documents.

Westerly Drainage: A public meeting is scheduled in Crookston on March 28 at the Government Center with landowners, sponsored by Polk County.

Building Project (District Office): YHR Partners proposed revisions to the plan, such as removing the second access to the basement. A meeting is planned with local contractors to review the plans and ask for suggestions that might be appetizing to local contractors.

Health Insurance: Swenby met with Mark Doneux, Capitol Region WD Administrator and MAWA President, and Eveline Meidt, from North Risk Partners about the possibility of setting up group health insurance through Mn Watersheds (formerly MAWD). The good news is that it is possible for Mn Watersheds to take the responsibility offering group health plans for its members (although we couldn't speak for them about the administrative burden and their capacity to provide such services). The bad news is that even if it is formed, the district would not qualify under group plans, because there is only one eligible employee and that leaves the district in the same situation. North Risk Partners, did however, offer to meet with Swenby again in the fall, to help research different companies to determine they can help offer a more affordable rate than what we are being offered currently. That being said, when Swenby disclosed the rates the district currently pays, North Risk Partners was not optimistic that it could be beat.

MCIT: MCIT has initiated Phase I of its five-year building appraisal project and the district office is scheduled for property appraisal in 2023 and is scheduled for the week of March 13, 2023.

Education Program: Swenby met with Wayne Goeken, Agassiz Environmental Learning Center about a potential partnership supporting watershed education. Goeken will prepare a proposal for the board to review.

Vesledahl Wetland Mitigation Landowner Meeting: The watershed district will help host a landowner meeting to provide an opportunity for landowners to meet with MnDOT and BWSR about the new permit process in place for beaver obstructions, and to present about the recent work that

was completed in the area. We are planning an early April meeting – time of day has not been set yet - opinions for encouraging attendance?

Riverwatch Forum: Swenby attended a portion of the Riverwatch Forum on March 1, 2023. The managers were shown a copy of the materials from the Win-E-Mac River Watch team and the forum program, indicating the sponsorship of the Sand Hill River Watershed District.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT.

Herrmann was absent, but a written report was provided to the managers.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

Farmstead Ring Dike Program: Swenby presented information regarding the allocation for farmstead ring dikes. The DNR has \$360,000 available as matching funds for eligible local governments and tribes to construct ring levees on private or public land for flood protection. This funding is limited to rural areas of the Red River Basin, and is best used to protect small sites such as homes and farmsteads. Watershed districts are eligible to receive funding. Application materials were provided to the managers.

The managers discussed options for the district moving forward with a cost share for this funding, Swenby would like to put in a press release, in the local paper and on our web-site. Swenby suggested a cost share consistent with prior years of 50/25/25. The managers discussed the costs of preliminary engineering, and who would be responsible should the project not see fruition.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to participate in the farmstead ring dike program using a cost share of 50/25/25 (50% MnDNR, 25% Landowner, 25% SHRWD), **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby will submit a press release and also place it on the district website. The managers would like to continue to think about the responsibility of preliminary engineering and decided not to make a decision at this time.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from MAWD and Drainage Work Group.

9. PERMITS:

There were no permits brought before the board.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, April 6, 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 10:00 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Engelstad. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary