



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: JUNE 6, 2024

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the June 6, 2024, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Don Andringa, Clayton Bartz, Craig Engelstad (until 10 AM) and Shawn Brekke. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant. Others in attendance included Zach Herrmann - Houston Engineering.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

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

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve the minutes from the May 2, 2024, meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to dispense the reading and approve the May 2024 Treasurer Report, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Swenby stated that this month she will be working with the accountant to discuss a better way to separate the Petition levies from the construction fund. The district began this new levy five years ago, and she would like a better way to present how these are allocated and what has been spent to date in each of the funds. She anticipates journal entries will be required and a new fund on the fund balance report. Swenby informed the board that next month the fund balance report may show a different display to better reflect the levies.

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

Anderson, Bottrell, Sanden & Thompson	120.00
April J. Swenby	142.71
Brady & Martz	8,000.00
City of Fertile	63.07
Climax Community Center	200.00
East Polk Soil and Water District	1,404.08
EcoLab	53.44
Garden Valley Telephone Company	178.48
Houston Engineering	23,978.53
Jason Benbo	450.00
Lacey Berhow	87.50
Otter Tail Power Company	345.50
Polk County Taxpayer Service Center	46.00
Wild Rice Electric	114.78
TOTAL	35,184.09

An additional was added for the City of Fertile for services through 5/21/24 for \$58.27.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve and pay the bills to be paid with a total of \$35,242.36, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Project #27: The diving team performed the annual inspection of the underwater equipment on Wednesday May 1. The footage has been forwarded to HEI for them to analyze and compare. They are planning on developing a maintenance strategy. Verbal inspection reports from the divers state that there didn't appear to be any worsening of the equipment. Chairman Christian suggested an avenue of turning on the charge during the diving inspection. Herrmann agreed that might be a good protocol to work with a company that is self-insured, given that an underwater inspection could be viewed as high risk. This would protect the District from potential claims arising from damages during the inspection. Herrmann has heard of companies that provide this service, and could inquire about these services. The board directed him to bring back more information about options to the board.

Ditch Inspections: Herrmann and Swenby completed annual ditch inspections in May. A summary was provided along with a detailed report of each system to the managers. Two major items were included as a recommendation and are included in the action items on Project 12 and 13. Trees were noted in the banks along Project # 11. The board agreed it is good to be proactive for trees to minimize future slope maintenance of the ditch. Swenby will look into options for removing the trees. The board recommended Car Tree Service or L & M spraying to kill the trees so that they can later be cut down.

Feedback on printed materials: Swenby presented a draft 2023 Annual Report, Good Steward postcard, and an invite for the SH Ditch Redetermination education sessions, scheduled for July 30, 2024. Swenby would like to work with the printer and have them printed in June, ready for distribution in early July. The distribution will be time-consuming due to the number of landowners who will be contacted.

The managers noted a couple of minor changes on the district annual report, and consensus was given to move forward with printing for distribution.

The managers reviewed the postcard to be distributed to landowners adjacent to our legal ditch systems. The card highlighted suggestions for landowners that can help make the watershed district more efficient. The card addresses reporting, land use, mowing and spraying. The managers suggested some language changes. A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve sending out postcards regarding landowner stewardship along public drainage systems, with noted language changes, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

A **Motion** was made by Manager Engelstad to approve as presented postcards inviting landowners to the July 30, 2024 SH Ditch Redetermination Education session, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

RAD Zoo Sponsorship, PC Fair: The RAD Zoo has a conflict on their schedule for the PC Fair, and will not be attending, so there is no sponsorship necessary for the PC Fair for the RAD Zoo.

Audit: The 2023 audit began the 2nd week of May by Brady Martz and is wrapping up.

MN 102 Boundary: Notice by BWSR will be in the newspaper and Swenby has placed it on our website.

Teams Training: Swenby attended a Microsoft Teams training in Grand Forks.

Flood Plain Mapping: Swenby provided minutes on a flood plain mapping meeting that she attended. Swenby stated if there is interest, she can organize a presentation on this program in the next upcoming month or two for the board to learn more to see if there is value for our district.

Car Show: In the past the City of Fertile has asked Swenby if they can use the district parking lot as a staging area for the car show in Fertile. Swenby would like to see the City be able to continue to use the space for this limited use. Given the board's discussions in the past couple of months about liability for allowing use on district owned property, Swenby checked with recommendations from MCIT and provided those

recommendations to the managers. MCIT suggested proof of insurance by the party accessing the property in the case of the City using the property for a staging area. Should arrangements like this be continued in the future, MCIT recommends a user agreement. The City of Fertile has not asked to use the property this year; however, in the past they have asked last minute, and should they need it Swenby wanted to make sure that there were no board objections. The board agreed that proof of insurance is sufficient for circumstances such as these if the city were to need the property and ask permission to use the lot. Swenby stated that because the district is adding on to the west, the parking lot will no longer be vacant for future use and a user agreement isn't necessary at this time.

Manager Engelstad asked about neighboring businesses who use the parking lot to park their vehicles. Swenby stated that neighboring businesses or their customers have not asked permission to use the parking lot, and when she became Administrator she had signs placed that state parking is reserved for Sand Hill River Watershed District guest parking to help alleviate this. Swenby, nor the district has given permission for any private use of the parking lot for neighboring businesses and could not answer about district liability for people who use the parking lot without permission. The board did not feel it necessary for Swenby have this discussion with neighboring businesses as signage is present.

Basement lights & furnace: The AELC has cleaned out their property from the basement and leftover personal belongings of Dan Wilken's have been returned. Bjerk and Swenby would like to spend some time down there this summer and do some sorting and some cleaning. Swenby stated that both her son and Bjerk's son will need volunteer hours through the high school, and they were thinking of using the boys for the lifting as needed. For now, Swenby stated she can use a light bar downstairs to get more light, or the board may want to consider hiring an electrician to put something permanent and bright downstairs. Manager Brekke suggested that when the new construction is in place, it may be the best time to ask the electrician to take a look in the basement to see what options there are for making it brighter. The board discussed options for old fuel oil furnace and its disposal. The board was invited to have a look downstairs before they leave.

2023 Disaster Funds: The state representative had initially asked for a tour of the sites that were not listed on the initial damage assessment, namely, the failure in Liberty Township along the road, and the site west of Beltrami in Scandia Township. They have since put in writing that the district may move forward with the repairs at a 75/25 cost share. Swenby explained that the repairs include mitigation to ensure that these damages do not reoccur. It is standard practice from the district to armor deficiencies as they arise so that they are resilient for future issues, and it is necessary to reinforce the slope of this area with armor. The state has not asked for the plan set for the repair, but have given written authorization to proceed with the repair. Swenby will send the plan set to the representative to ensure that the costs will be covered for the proposed repair using the design from HEI.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT

Moen Erosion Control: Permits have been applied for.

Ditch inspections: Ditch inspections were performed in May. Recommendations are in the action items for two systems suggesting cleanouts.

Project # 12: Swenby asked Herrman to develop a quote package for the cleanout of this channel. A survey was conducted at Swenby's direction regarding a reported high-set side inlet, which is included in the action items.

Project Team (SH River Ecosystem Restoration): Herrmann reported that borings have been collected, and lab analysis is underway.

Project #17: A field survey was collected at culvert locations and Herrmann is evaluating the suitability of the LiDAR data for bidding quantities. Necessary survey data was collected at the same time for acquiring buffer using the incremental buffer law.

Project # 27: Herrmann stated he continues to work on specifications for Boll.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

A. 103D.905 Subd 3 Petition Levies: Swenby will be meeting with the Polk County Commissioners in July to present the annual report for 2023 and present the proposed petition levies using MSA 103D.095

Subd3. Last year the amount levied for each category of our petitions was \$110,852.62. The new capacity is \$135,866.75 for 2025. Swenby provided actual expenses in the district categories, and presented projected expenses for each category. The managers reviewed each petition and category budget item. Swenby suggested lowering the levy amount for the category “Studies and Agency Support”.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve two presented petitions at the new tax capacity of \$135,866.75 for petitions “Water Quality and Erosion” and “Water Management and Retention” and \$100,000 for the petition for “Studies and Agency Support”, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

Project #12 cleaning and side inlet height (Ulseth) & 13 Cleaning: Last fall a landowner asked the district to evaluate a side inlet that he testifies was set too high at the time of construction in Section 17 of Hammond Township. The landowner also testifies that he told staff years ago about the problem, but there was no action taken by the district staff and he is asking for district action. When surveyors were surveying Project # 17, Swenby asked for a quick survey of this side inlet to determine if the field drainage was the problem, or if it was the side inlet, as there as no way to go back years ago to verify his testimony. Herrmann stated that the survey indicates that the grades work to reset the culvert. Manager Andringa stated that he remembers the construction of Project # 13, and it was done late fall and it had already begun to freeze. Manager Andringa agreed that it is entirely possible that the culvert was not set correctly given the conditions at the time of construction. The board was presented with the inspection reports for Project 12 and 13 with images showing maintenance needs.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to proceed forward with the recommendations from staff for cleaning Project # 12 and Project #13 and the resetting of the side inlet in Section 17 of Hammond Township, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

- B. **July 2024 Regular Board Meeting:** The first Thursday of the month for July falls on a holiday.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to change the July 2024 regular business meeting to July 2 , 2024 **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

- C. **Public Relations Piece:** Modifications were provided to the public relations piece regarding the SH River Ecosystem restoration Project Team, as per request last month. Additional changes were suggested clarifying that the Sand Hill River Watershed District did not financially contribute nor were they responsible for the design the dam removal.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke approve the piece, with changes, as presented, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

The managers decided not to place this article in the newspaper at this time. The purpose of the article is for distribution in the annual report and for landowners who have expressed concerns about the removal of the dams by the USACE several years back. It was suggested that if managers have landowners come to them about this concern, they can give them a copy of this article that highlights the origination of the project and its intent, who designed it, and what the watershed is working towards now along this stretch. If landowners continue to have concerns, they can call the office and Swenby can work through that with them. Swenby will make sure Scott Eia gets a copy of this as he presented to the board of managers last year his concerns. If there are other landowners that should have a copy, Swenby will have extra copies for distribution. Swenby also suggested offering copies to the project team.

- D. **Diorama Frame:** The artist has provided optional frame options and cover for the diorama that is being created. Because of the size, this is being separated into three separate pieces. For transporting a delicate piece of art this may be a good option, when it is not on display at the watershed office.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to approve the frame case for the diorama for Mahogany or cherry for \$550 plus the additional cost for covers, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.** Swenby will send a sample of the district’s interior wood color so that they may color match appropriately.

- E. **Jack Doyle Easement:** The easement for jack Doyle's property on Project # 27 is set to expire in July 2024. The attorney has drafted a new easement extending for another five years, as agreed upon by Doyle and Swenby.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve the easement as presented for an additional five years, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

6. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from the International Water Institute and MN Watershed's. There was no other business presented by the managers.

7. PERMITS:

There were no permits presented to the board.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

The next regular meeting will be held July 2, 2024, 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 10:47 AM, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary