



TITLE: REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2025

1. ATTENDANCE:

Chairman Stuart Christian called the November 6, 2025, meeting to order at 8:00 AM at the District Office. Other managers attending were Don Andringa, Clayton Bartz, and Shawn Brekke. Managers absent: Craig Engelstad. Staff members present included April Swenby – Administrator and Donna Bjerk – Administrative Assistant.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve the agenda, with the addition of rental agreement discussion and security camera action items, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

3. MINUTES:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Bartz to approve minutes for the regular board of managers meeting on October 2, 2025, adding some clarifying language and clerical revisions, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

4. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve the October treasurer's report as presented, Seconded by Manger Brekke. **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	338.20
Diligent	2,563.86
East Polk Soil and Water District	1,536.33
EcoLab	60.88
First Community Credit Union	863.94
Garden Valley Telephone Company	1,606.69
H2Over Viewers	32,201.73
HN Quality Plumbing	436.64
Houston Engineering	63,734.50
Jason Benbo	175.00
Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust	251.00
Mn Watersheds	4,444.00
Office Supplies Plus	45.98
Otter Tail Power Company	164.41
US Geological Survey	6,380.00
Wild Rice Electric	122.27
TOTAL	<u>114,925.43</u>

Two additional bills were presented: the City of Fertile for \$59.69, and Lacey Berhow - \$387.50. Swenby reminded the board that \$150 of Berhow's billing was approved last month, leaving the amount for approval for November totaling \$237.50.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to approve and pay the bills to be paid with a total of \$115,222.62 **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

Swenby stated that in January, there is an investment that is due and her plan was to not renew as she projects 2026 costs. Due to the redeterminations that were added and the amount of construction that happened this season, and the extremely slow rate of being reimbursed through WBIF and HSEM, she wanted to know if there was board objection to withdrawing \$500,000 of the CD early, if needed. She spoke with the bank who stated that if the district were to withdraw \$500,000 the district would receive back \$499,673.66 after penalties (\$326.34). Swenby added that this is a 3-month interest penalty plus a \$25 fee on the amount needed to withdraw. All managers unanimously agreed to withdraw the funds if needed.

5. TRUTH AND TAXATION

The budget for 2026 was presented and an opportunity for public comment was provided. Revisions were not made to the budget as approved on September 4, 2025, for 2026. No comments were made.

6. DITCH LEVIES

The board was presented with information regarding drainage system costs and assessments necessary to pay drainage system costs related to Sand Hill River Watershed Ditches and Projects, **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville), and #27 Union Lake Pumping (Pre and Post)**. The Board gave instruction to its staff to take the actions necessary to certify assessments for drainage system costs. Pursuant to the Board's instruction, staff prepared a draft assessment order for the Board's consideration. Based on the information provided, Manager Andringa moved adoption of the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, section 103E.725 provides, all fees and costs incurred relating to a drainage system, including repairs, inspections, engineering, viewing, and publications, are costs of the drainage system and must be assessed against the property and entities benefited; and

WHEREAS, the Board, pursuant to procedures under the drainage code, Statutes Chapter 103E, has performed work and incurred costs on Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville), and #27 Union Lake Pumping.**

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.655 requires the costs for drainage project proceedings and construction to be paid from the drainage system account by drawing on the account. Statutes section 103E.645 requires the payment of fees and expenses; and

WHEREAS, the drainage system accounts Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville), and #27 Union Lake Pumping** do not contain sufficient funds to pay current costs; and

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.655 provides that if money is not available in the drainage system account to pay current costs, the board may, by unanimous resolution, transfer funds from any other drainage system account under its jurisdiction or from the its general revenue fund to the drainage system account. If the board transfers money from another account or fund to a drainage system account, the money plus interest must be reimbursed from the proceeds of the drainage system that received the transfer. The interest must be computed for the time the money is actually needed at the same rate per year charged on drainage liens and assessments; and

WHEREAS, Statutes section 103E.755 allows the Board to establish a repair fund, surplus, in the drainage system accounts in order to have funds available for future actions and costs on the drainage systems; and

WHEREAS, assessments to repay drainage system costs may be paid in annual installments not to exceed 20 years at a rate of interest not to exceed the rate determined by the state court administrator for judgments under section 549.09 (currently 4% maximum).

THEREFORE, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District, Drainage Authority for Sand Hill River Watershed District Ditches and Drainage Projects: **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville), and #27 Union Lake Pumping** adopts the following drainage system assessments, and directs certification thereof to the Polk County and Norman Auditor for collection:

County Ditch # 9	\$25,000
County Ditch # 119	\$10,000
Total #32 - Ditch #80	\$9,000
Sand Hill Ditch	\$53,000
#03 Liberty-Onstad	\$7,000
#05 Ditch 17-2	\$13,000
#11 Beltrami Flood Control	\$5,000
#12 County Ditches 98 &148	\$6,000
#13 Reis-Scandia	\$5,000
#17 Polk County #41	\$75,000
#20 Ditch # 46	\$7,500
#24 Ditch 77 and 166	\$18,000
#27 Union Lake Pumping (Post ROB)	\$15,000
#27 Union Lake Pumping (PRE ROB)	\$10,000

This resolution shall serve as the Board's assessment order as required by Minnesota statutes chapter 103E; and

FURTHER, the Board of Managers of the Sand Hill River Watershed District authorizes inter-funds loans from (account of the WD) to the drainage system accounts for Sand Hill River Watershed District ditches and drainage projects **County Ditch # 9, County Ditch # 119, #32 Ditch #80, Sand Hill Ditch, #03 Liberty-Onstad, #05 Ditch 17-2, #11 Beltrami Flood Control, #12 County Ditches 98 &148, #13 Reis-Scandia, #17 Polk County #41, #20 Ditch # 46, #24 Ditch 77 and 166 (Nielsville), and #27 Union Lake Pumping** to cover deficiencies in the accounts in fiscal year 2026.

This resolution was **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. After discussion, the President called the question. A roll call vote was held

	Yea	Nay	Absent	Abstain
Christian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>
Engelstad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The question was on the adoption of the foregoing resolution. Upon the following roll call vote, the President declared the Resolution 2025-A. **The resolution passed.**

5. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Beaver Control: Project 5 had a large dam reported this summer. Now that the crops are off, Joe Miller has been hired to remove the dam. Beaver trappers have been contacted to scout the Bear Park area to scout but due to extremely low river conditions they were unable to float the river. Swenby also reported that last week beaver activity was noted at the very east side of the Sand Hill Ditch and she contacted the trapper.

SH Ditch/FEMA: The allocations have been submitted from FEMA. Swenby provided a document FEAM has provided for watershed signature. Swenby stated that she is waiting for more guidance before she signs, as the district may change the scope due to mitigation planning. Below is a table highlighting the expected costs. Through a meeting in November with another new FEMA rep, we learned that through the mitigation process, the CRC net cost has a cap of doubling; however the mitigation plan has to check certain boxes of criteria. Swenby provided to the managers the mitigation plan completed by HEI that she submitted to FEMA November 3. We meet on November 17 to move through this process.

CRC Net Cost	\$2,490,264.00
Federal Share (75.00%)	\$1,867,698.00
Non-Federal Share (25.00%)	\$622,566.00

Corp of Engineers 1135 Funding/Feasibility SH Ecosystem: Swenby submitted a letter of intent for federal assistance under the Continuing Authorities Program, Section 1135 (CAP) to complete the planning, design, and construction of the Sand Hill River Ecosystem Restoration Project. HEI helped to supply the technical engineering language for this submission. Along with a letter of intent images and project locations were included.

Project #27: Project #27 was not accepted for FHM grant awards. Swenby has reached out to legislators (Senator Johnson and Rep. Steve Gandner) who are working with their researchers for options. Both legislators were receptive.

Building Project: The contractor offered \$10,000 off to accept the cabinetry as is. The allowance was \$15K +/- for cabinetry/installation etc. We accepted this offer. A few punch list items remain including rain gutters, the railing and snow stops. Swenby asked the managers to tour the space and point out anything that you see should be taken care of throughout the month. Swenby has contacted Paul Biermeier of Crookston who does parking painting, and he quoted \$150 to paint the handicapped space for parking and can do this next spring. Swenby has verified with the architect that one designated space is sufficient. Curb stops were purchased and they'll be installed before winter. The managers asked Swenby to purchase a battery operated clock for the board room.

Open House/50th Anniversary: Swenby is planning an Open House December 8, 2025 and provided the graphic she has submitted to the *Fertile Journal*. To complement this, an article highlighting the 50th Anniversary of the watershed will also be published in the *Fertile Journal*. Swenby plans on e-mailing this to agencies/partners. The watershed will be recognized at Mn Watersheds this year for the 50th Anniversary. Swenby was looking for ideas for public relations. Swenby plans to have the drone footage played on the monitors during the open house. She stated that she has worked with Herrmann to have large watershed maps available for give away that reflect the district's new boundary. She will have annual reports to distribute. She also plans to have copies of the historical assessment that the district performed on the "bank" building. The district has pens left over from the fair. Swenby asked for additional suggestions. Manager Bartz suggested extending personal invite to Barbie Yergens who is the widow of the architect who designed the new office space.

Manager Brekke and Manager Andrina would like information for ordering logo shirts.

District Signage: Swenby presented additional options for signs from Premier Signs attached. Swenby suggested waiting on this to see what renters of the building would like. Swenby asked the board to drive downtown and look at the flat signs vs. the 3-D signs (Riverview, Hanson Chiropractic and comparable signs along Highway 32), and highlighted the signage on the west/playground side of Fertile-Beltrami School.

Spraying (trees/shrubs in legal systems): After inspections next year, we will develop a map of areas, after review of the sites. The approach that has been successful for other watersheds has varied depending on the size of brush growth. For bigger stuff they thought timing would be good to get them cut, then the district would spray the regrowth.

Sand Hill Advisory Committee Meeting: The SHAC will meet on November 20, 2025 at the district office with a breakfast meeting. The terms of Manager Brekke and Manager Engelstad expire in January.

Personnel: The attorney is reviewing the Personnel manual to accommodate required changes in 2026 for Paid Family Medical Leave. The Personnel Committee will meet with the attorney November 19 to review

these changes and set percentages to meet notice requirements for December 1. The board agreed to delegate the percentage setting to the personnel committee in cooperation with the district attorney. Swenby assumed that the district will pass along the full amount eligible to the employee, and because the district is a small employer the minimum amount is .44%.

Office Rental: Countryside Insurance Agency has accepted the district's proposal for office space rental. Rinke Noonan is drafting a lease document. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to have an official lease for today's meeting, but will be available for board approval December 8. Countryside Insurance Agency is planning on moving in December 9 pending board approval of the lease. The board agreed to allow them to move in furniture before December 8 while the weather is cooperating.

Additional Information: Swenby provided an updated written report from H2Over Viewers, Minnesota Paid Leave Information, and a Mahnomon County Commissioner Meeting.

6. ENGINEER'S REPORT

In Herrmann's absence a written report was presented to the board.

7. ACTION ITEMS.

Surplus Items: The district Christmas tree/lights do not work and decorations are out of date. The fuel oil furnace in the basement has no use to the district.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to include the above listed items as surplus and obsolete property and include them on the auction with Oistad Estates, **Seconded** by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Christmas Tree/Decorations: A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to authorize a budget not to exceed \$1,000 for a district Christmas tree/holiday decor, **Seconded** by Manager Brekke. **The Motion was carried.** The board suggested a new tradition of buying a personalized ornament for the tree.

Garden Valley Capital Credit – Swenby provided a capital credit offer from Garden Valley in the amount of \$8,327.60. Swenby asked if the managers would like to apply for redemption of this offer.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Brekke to decline redemption of Garden Valley Capital Credits at this time, **Seconded** by Manager Bartz. **The Motion was carried.**

Cameras: Swenby requested board direction regarding the continuation of maintaining a visitor log at the district office, noting that with another entity joining the district, the practicality of recording all visitors may be unrealistic. Swenby explained that the visitor log was originally implemented by her in 2023 as a proactive measure during a contentious community time. Manager Brekke commented that personal visitors are not a concern for him and gave examples such as Swenby's/Bjerk's family or personal friends entering the building during work hours, if staff are performing their duties. The board agreed that staff management to this level of detail is unnecessary. The board discussed potential security considerations, including the possible use of exterior cameras to address issues such as property damage and any future need to monitor building access.

A **Motion** was made by Manager Andringa to move forward the proposal submitted from Garden Valley in the spring of 2025 for two exterior security cameras. **Seconded** by Manger Brekke. **The Motion was carried.**

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The managers received information from the Drainage Work Group, MN Assn. of Watershed Administrators, the International Water Institute, and the Red River Basin Commission.

The managers were reminded that the December meeting is considered a special meeting, not a regular meeting. Agenda items may not be added the day of the meeting. She reminded the managers to let her know in advance of any items they'd like on the agenda.

9. PERMITS:

Swenby provided the declaration and covenant drafted by Rinke Noonan and signed by Monty Lunde for permit #25-017. Swenby included attorney correspondence related to costs to draft the document. There were no objections to the recording of this document.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Due to scheduling conflicts, the next regular meeting will be held December 8, 2025, as a special meeting, 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 9:56 AM, Seconded by Manager Andringa. **The Motion was carried.**

Donna Bjerck, Administrative Assistant

Shawn Brekke, Secretary