



**FREEBORN COUNTY**  
**SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 8:30 am

## 1. Call to Order

- The regular meeting of the Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) was called to order by District Chairman Helland at the district office located at 1400 West Main Street, Albert Lea, MN, on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 8:30 am.

## Attendees

- In attendance: Curt Helland (District Chairman), Vickie Heers (Treasurer), Brad Kramer (Secretary), Scott Lightly (District Vice-Chairman), Casey Madson (Supervisor), Lindsey Cornell (District Manager), Chad Billat (Project Manager), Mark Trnka (Conservation Engineer), Linda Mestnik (Finance & Administrative Specialist), Senja Viktora (Outreach & Technical Specialist), Annie Gunness (BWSR South Region Board Conservationist).
- Guest introductions: Nathan Bird (NRCS District Conservationist), Liz Ludwig (FSA County Executive Director)

## 2. Approval of Minutes

- a. A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026, was made by Kramer and seconded by Madson. **MOTION CARRIED.**

## 3. Treasurer's Report

- a. Heers reported that the balance in the checking account was \$28,164.40, savings \$1,200,719.70, CD (Security Bank) \$250,000.00, and CD (Merchants Bank) \$235,000.00. A motion to approve the treasurer's report and payment of bills was made by Kramer and seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED.**

## 4. Financial Presentation

- a. Manager Cornell provided a presentation on the financials for the District as of February 28, 2026, which provided an opportunity for thoughtful discussions, considerations, and questions with the Board and staff members.

## 5. Certificate of Deposit with Merchant's Bank renewal

- a. Cornell presented to the Board the renewal options for the Certificate of Deposit (CD) that is expiring on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026, with Merchant's Bank. Kramer made a motion to renew the CD balance, not to exceed the FDIC insured limit, for a six-month term. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED.**

## 6. New Trailer

- a. Cornell presented the need to purchase a new trailer for the side-by-side and enhanced security device(s) for better security at the office parking lot. Kramer made a motion to authorize up to \$4,000 to purchase a new trailer and security device(s). The motion was seconded by Lightly. **MOTION CARRIED**

## 7. Cost Share & Grant Items

### a. New Requests

- i. Chad Billat presented three wetland restoration CRP Incentive projects to the board. Contract FY-SW-25-CRP-05 was not completed by time of board meeting and was not included in the motion. Kramer made a motion to approve three CRP Incentive contracts. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
FY-SW-25-CRP-02	CRP Incentive – Wetland Restoration	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	P25-0455
FY-SW-25-CRP-03	CRP Incentive – Wetland Restoration	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	P25-0455
FY-SW-25-CRP-04	CRP Incentive – Wetland Restoration	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	P25-0455

- ii. Trnka presented a 15-year Windbreak contract. Mestnik requested that the contract number be amended to FY-26/27-CC-01 because it was proposed incorrectly on the agenda for the meeting. Madson made a motion to amend the contract number to FY-26/27-CC-01 and approve the contract as amended. Kramer seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

Contract Number	Practice	Project Estimate	Encumbered	Fund Source
FY-26/27-CC-01	Windbreak-Shelterbelt Establishment	\$3,225.00	\$3,225.00	P26-0323

**b. Conservation Delivery Cost-Share Policy**

- i. Cornell brought before the board a recommendation to adopt a cost share policy for Conservation Delivery that mirrors Conservation Contracts. A motion was made by Heers to adopt the cost-share policy for Conservation Delivery Cost-Share as presented, seconded by Kramer. **MOTION CARRIED**

**c. CRP Incentive Projects**

- i. Cornell requested authorization to approve time-sensitive contracts while the CRP sign up is open. Kramer made a motion to authorize Manager Cornell to approve time-sensitive contracts while the CRP Incentive contract is open. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

**d. RCPP Batching Period**

- i. Trnka presented the RCPP batching period list, excluding landowner and location information, requesting approval for five contracts that scored the highest this period. Kramer made a motion to approve the five contracts presented. Madson seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

**e. Discuss 2023 State Cost-Share Fund**

- i. Cornell presented the funds remaining in the 2023 State Cost Share grant (P23-5773) that expires on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, and options for implementing a spending plan that requires some changes to maximize the opportunity to utilize remaining funds and put them into practice(s).
- a. Kramer made a motion to approve increasing grant P23-5773 to allow for more than 20% of the grant to be used for staff time. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**
  - b. Kramer made a motion to adopt the Conservation Contracts Shelterbelt Wind-Break policy into grant P23-5773 for practices that address wind erosion and to authorize manager Cornell to approve projects that would fit within the grant requirements. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

**8. 2025 Annual Report**

- a. Viktora presented the 2025 Annual Report for board approval. Kramer made a motion to approve. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

**9. 2026 Annual Plan Review**

- a. Viktora presented the 2026 Annual Plan for review. Madson made a motion to approve. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**

## 10. NRCS Agency Report

- a. Nathan Bird, NRCS District Conservationist, introduced himself to the board and shared some of the tasks he handles in the Freeborn County office.

## 11. FSA Report

- a. County Executive Director, Liz Ludwig, shared recent updates with the board and tasks they are focused on currently.

## 12. BWSR Report

- a. Annie Gunness provided BWSR updates on many funding opportunities and deadlines, including but not limited to: RCPP Soil Health, Soil Health Delivery 26/27, and Clean Water grant opportunities. BWSR is offering virtual spring training opportunities for staff; registration is now open. Jill Sackett Eberhart will be our Board Conservationist backup while Annie is on leave.

## 13. Supervisor Reports

- a. Lightly attended the University of MN Grain Gathering on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026, in Rochester, and found the event very insightful. Additionally, he attended the Soil Health Winter Workshop on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Owatonna, MN.
- b. Kramer shared Shell Rock Watershed District updates with the board.
- c. Madson attended the University of MN Grain Gathering on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026, in Rochester. Madson also attended the Soil Health Winter Workshop on February 17<sup>th</sup> in Owatonna, MN.
- d. Helland attended a TSA meeting on Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

## 14. Manager's Report

- a. Manager Cornell provided updates on the 2026 MAWQCP funding and recommended moving forward with longer draft of the employee handbook to be reviewed by legal counsel.

## 15. Staff Reports

- a. Viktora provided a tree sale update to the board.
- b. Viktora updated the board regarding ADA compliance for website which is required by April 2027.
- c. Viktora and Trnka presented an opportunity, working with the Freeborn County Fairgrounds, to move forward to collaborate on planting a Pollinator Garden, next to the Conservation Building, for educational and marketing opportunities. Kramer made a motion to move forward to collaborating on a Pollinator Garden with the Freeborn County Fairgrounds. Heers seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED**
- d. Billat provided updates on CRP and CREP that he is working on.

## 16. ArcGIS Demonstration

- a. Trnka provided a live demonstration of tools in ArcGIS to show just a small portion of the program features that are used by the staff in their work.

## 17. Election Filing reminder

- Opens May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and closes at 5:00 pm on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026.

## 18. Adjournment

- There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Madson. Kramer seconded. **MOTION CARRIED.** Next meeting Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 8:30 AM.

These are preliminary minutes subject to board approval at the next regular monthly meeting of the Board of Supervisors on Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

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**Brad Kramer, Board Secretary**

**Date**